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THEOLOGY FOR CHILDREN.

THEOLOGY
FOR
CHILDREN.

BY
MARK EVANS.

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TO
THE GLORY OF OUR
FATHER IN HEAVEN,
AND TO
THOSE LITTLE ONES WHOSE ANGELS DO ALWAYS
BEHOLD HIS FACE.

TO
THOSE WHO MAY READ THIS BOOK
TO CHILDREN.

I WROTE the following pages originally for my own little ones. They are published in the hope that they may be of use in a wider circle.

I was urged to write them, because of a great difficulty that was felt, in meeting with any book which set forth with sufficient simplicity the good news of God.

It will be seen at a glance that I have not attempted to teach what is known as dogmatic theology. I have not

found that the formulæ, into which the patristic age or any subsequent one petrified the truth as it is in Jesus, have stimulated in men the Divine life ;—that they have split into fragments the body of Christ is, I fear, undeniable.

The state of religion among us can hardly satisfy any one. The enemies of Truth are as bold as ever ; the children of the kingdom, many of them, are trembling as what they had thought to be the pillars of their faith shake under them ; and others, like the deaf adder, take refuge in stopping their ears.

If this were not so, would it have been possible for the proposed revision of the Scriptures to awaken the opposition and alarm which it has done in many quarters ?

“If verses in this Gospel,” so runs the cry, “have been wrongly translated; if the passage in that Epistle, which we have always taken as a watchword, is spurious, what safeguard have we? What is there left?”

I would answer, that when the highest criticism has done its best; when it has given us, as nearly as can be, the original reading of the various Books which make up our Bible, there remains, in greater purity than ever, the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus ~~Christ~~.

There remains, the message which He brought, and for which the world was dying,—the news of a Father in heaven who loves for ever; of a Son who came to make manifest the Father, and to lead all men back to Him; of

a Spirit, through which Father and Son are One ; and receiving which, we may become one with both.

If that be thought by anyone, too poor, too plain a Gospel, I own that to me it seems sufficient to save mankind ; to turn darkness into light ; to win all the love of our souls ; to give us strength and victory over sin ; to make us feel ourselves to be the children of God our Father, and heirs to the inheritance which Christ has gone before us to prepare.

Human relationships are sacramental in the education of the young. To children, the loving strength of a father, the tender sympathy of a mother, the helping hand of a brother older than themselves, are realities, and enable them to

appreciate and enter into those Divine relationships in which they share, and of which these earthly forms are but the shadow and the sign.

If this be so, a fearful responsibility rests upon us who are parents. We have to set forth in our daily life, nothing short of this—the character of God. If, by our want of discipline, our hasty tempers, our lack of interest and tender sympathy, we make the name of Father anything but a word that gladdens them and sets their heart beating with joy, we are offending those little ones for whom Christ died !

We cannot teach children without being taught by them. Their simplicity of character, their immediate recognition

of love and gentleness, must move our hearts ; their keen sense of justice, their constant question, "Is it true?" must shatter many a deception and lead us to satisfy ourselves that we understand the grounds of our own faith ; must lead us daily to ask our Father for more of that Spirit which will guide us into all truth.

I hope no one will think the familiar language used sometimes in this little book, is indicative of irreverence. I have tried to make God and Christ real to children. If I have only succeeded in that—if in any degree I have helped them to understand what God their Father would have them do ; how Jesus the Son of God has given them the power to do it, something will have been gained—a few children of God will have been drawn nearer to Him and

to each other as they grow in years. Our earliest impressions and belief have a life-long hold upon us, and it may be, that a simpler setting forth of Christ's Gospel to the children of this generation, may tend to bind them and those who follow them in the cords of love—love that will prove the truth of God, as no creeds of human devising can establish it; love that will set forth its power by drawing all men to Jesus.

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THEOLOGY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

YOUR earliest remembrance is of your father and mother.

From as far back as you can call to mind, they have always been with you, joining you in your play, nursing you when you were sick, comforting you when you were in pain or trouble. All that made you happy, all that made the world seem bright, they gave you. They were ever ready to reward you for being good; they were sad and unhappy if you did what was wrong. Now and again they had to punish you, and you do not know how grieved they would be at having to do so. They would talk to each

other about it, hope that you might be sorry, and make up your mind not to do what was wrong again. And if, as sometimes happened, you were still obstinate and passionate, they would send you away from them, or punish you in some other manner. But whatever was done, was done only because they loved you so much, and knew that if you grew up acting wrongly, and yet going unpunished, you would by and by become wicked and unhappy yourself, and perhaps make a great many other people so. Being unhappy, and doing what is wrong, always meet after a time. You are never really happy when you have made your father and mother sad. Perhaps you have done a thing they told you not to do: you were not thinking about them at the time, nor of what they had said to you. You *did* enjoy yourself for a few minutes! but afterwards how was it? Your father and mother looked grave and sad; they had told you many times before not to do what you have done: so now you must be sent away, while your brothers and sisters are enjoying themselves. You do not feel happy in the room by yourself, do you? You are more than unhappy, you are very frightened, when your father comes in to punish you! He begs you to be sorry for

what you have done, tells you how sad and unhappy you have made your mother and him. You see the tears start in his eyes, you remember how kind and loving he has been, and you think you will always another time do what you are told. But very likely your father has spoken to you like this often and often before, so now he is obliged to punish you, to make you cry long and bitterly, not because he likes to hear you cry! No, indeed, he would far rather suffer the pain than that you should; but that would do you no good. He punishes you because you will remember his doing so, and next time when you feel inclined to be naughty, you may say to yourself, "My father had to punish me before, for doing this; I will not oblige him to do it again, I will not make him sad."

So you see how it is, that even when you really feel sorry for having done wrong, when you have promised not to do it again, your father has still sometimes to punish you. You have often been sorry before, often made promises to be good, but they have all been forgotten, and they would be forgotten this time too, but for the pain which you cannot help remembering. There is always pain of some sort, comes of doing wrong, you may be sure. A

great many children have no father or mother wise enough to teach them what is right and good, or to correct them when they do what is wrong. Do you think these poor children are not punished? Indeed, as they grow up, they have to suffer far more than they would have done if they had been punished when they were children, and made to do what was right.

Try and think of this whenever you have been naughty, and your father is compelled to punish you. Remember that he does so, not because he is ill-tempered, and likes to see you unhappy, but because he loves you so much that he will not let you grow up disobedient and passionate and cowardly. Do not feel angry with him, but bear the pain you have to bear as bravely as you can. There was once a little boy who had a very kind father. They loved each other dearly. One day the son had done something very wrong. He knew that he had, and that his father, though he loved him so much, was sure to punish him. So when his father came to him, he held out his hand bravely, and though each cut of the rod brought the tears into his eyes, he could still find voice enough to say to his father, "I can bear it from *you*, sir."

How happy that boy must have felt when the punishment was over, and he was once again in his father's arms. The past all forgiven ;—the face that had looked on him sadly and sternly, all smiles and laughter. Nothing is said now about his having done wrong ; that is all forgotten ; but the boy still feels the pain, and as he feels it, he presses his cheek close against his father's, and thinks how kind and patient his father has been with him, and that he will always try and be good for his dear sake.

You often think of your mother as more tender, more gentle than your father. Many a time she has come to you with the tears running down her face, and begged and prayed you to be good. She has caught at your first half-hearted promise, and encouraged you to confess all. You are more familiar with her than you are with your father. He is often from home during the day—she is always there, ready to play with you, gladly answering your every question. She will listen at night as you ask God to take care of you and make you good. She will come softly to your bedside and kiss you when you are sleeping, and often her bright look will be the first thing that your eyes open on in the morning. But she cannot join your long and rougher games,—

you want some one able to carry you, to run with you, and play without being tired, and so you are always glad when you can get your father with you, and you are not quite sure whether it is he or your mother that you love best. You say you "love both best," and you feel that if away from either for any time, you would be very unhappy.

They cannot, however, always be with you. One day you must go to school, and then it may be a great many weeks before you see them again, or—you may find yourself alone in the world. Father and mother may have gone to heaven, brother and sister may be in a foreign country, there may be no one to love you, no one even to be kind to you! Yet even then, you would not be alone. Shall I tell you why? Because our Father in heaven would be with you!

Do you know who I mean? God, who is the Father of us all. The Father of everybody in the world. The people in all countries are His children, in England and France, India and China. He made them all, He takes care of them, and wants them all to come to Him in His beautiful home in heaven. Our Father has even more

children still. Far away, up where the stars are, there are ever so many children, living in a glorious place where they always see Him, and they love Him so dearly, that they would do nothing that He does not like.

In God's family in this world, there are naughty children as well as good, but He loves them all dearly ! When they do what is wrong, He has no choice but to punish them, but it is only to make them good and happy. Even when He punishes, He will never do it roughly, if gentleness will make His little ones sorry and come back to Him. A mother sat one day near the edge of a high cliff looking out over the sea. Her boy was near her, gathering wild flowers, when a butterfly started away from one of them, and in a moment the little fellow was after it, till he had come close upon his prize, resting in its flight on a piece of yellow heather which hung down over the cliff. The mother saw the fearful danger the child was in, though he in the heat of his pursuit thought nothing of it. One step more, one hand only stretched out to grasp the butterfly, and he would have fallen, to be dashed in pieces over the rocks ! She would not raise her voice in anger, lest she should startle him, and he should go farther from her to his death, but she

called his name in her softest, sweetest tone. The boy looked towards her, and as he did so, she held up something which attracted him, and her heart nearly burst with happiness as she saw him running towards her. That is just how God our Father loves to manage His children. He sees them chasing some butterfly pleasure, something that they think beautiful, but which is leading them into terrible danger which they do not know of, though He does. If He called them roughly—if He frightened them—they would take another step away from Him, and fall into the sin He wants to save them from ; but when He calls them lovingly and sweetly by their own name, they cannot help listening, and they steal back to His side, ashamed of themselves for having ever gone away.

If God has so many children to think about and to take care of, you may fancy that He has not time to attend to them all. You forget how different He is from your earthly father and mother. They are often tired and weary ; He is never weary. They, like yourself, must sleep at night, but His eyes are never closed. They are sometimes poorly, perhaps cross ; He is never ill, He can never be *cross*. He watches lovingly over every one of His children, all through

the day, all through the night, hearing everything they say, seeing everything they do. He smiles and is glad when you are good and happy, He is grieved and sad when you do wrong. As you put your hands together at night and say "Our Father," He is listening to every word you repeat. Your mother kisses you and leaves the room, but God still waits: it is His sweet kiss on your eyelids that closes them in sleep, His kiss will open them once more in the morning.

Do you wonder that you cannot see Him? How was it you did not see your mother last night, when she came to your bedside and kissed you? Because you were sleeping, and your eyes were shut. How is it that if your father comes to you in a room where you are wide awake, and the shutters are closed, that you do not see him? Because there is not light enough, you say. Now open the shutters just the very least bit. A little stream of light comes through—not enough to show you anything in the room, but if the sun is shining outside, you will see tiny specks of dust floating about in the stream of light. There is something even in the air, that you did not know was there! Now open the shutters a little wider, very little. You can

just make out that there are things in the room, you can just see that there is some one standing there. As you push the shutter wider open and wider till the full sunlight pours in, the form of your father standing there grows clearer and clearer, and at last every book on the shelves, every picture on the wall, is as clear to you as can be. Does that help you to understand how it is that you cannot see your heavenly Father though He is always close beside you? On earth, we are all of us, as it were, in a darkened room ; but one day, little by little or perhaps all at once, God's angels will open the shutters. Then we shall see our dear Father's face, and shall never want to go away from Him again.

Think how He must love you, when He gives you so many things every day to make you happy. Wherever you go, you see His beautiful gifts. The bright sun that warms you in summer-time, the birds that are singing when you wake in the morning, the soft green grass you play on, and every lovely garden flower ! See, too, how all these things are ever saying "Thank you" to God for His love, and doing something for Him. He feeds the birds, and they sing for Him. He gives the flowers rain, and white snow

to cover them when it is cold, and the flowers smell sweetly for Him. The stars shine at night to His glory, and as you peep up at them from your nursery window, they look "like little gimlet-holes to let the glory through" from the beautiful home where our Father lives.

I have told you that God is never *cross* with His children, but He is sometimes very angry. I want you above all things to understand the difference. You are cross now and then, ill-tempered,—the friends you expected to play with you have not come, you were going out, and the rain stopped you. Worse than being ill-tempered, you do and say unkind things to others. Now, our Father never can be cross in that way, but He can be very angry, and so should you be sometimes. Suppose you saw a man trying to make a little child do something that would hurt it? telling it, for instance, to eat something that would make it sick—perhaps kill it! Then would be a time to be angry indeed. Suppose you saw a boy tying a little bird to a branch of a tree, so that a cat that was hiding in the shrubbery could get to it, you would feel angry with the boy, would you not? And so you should. It is in this way that our Father in heaven is made angry.

A boy who did such a thing as that should be well punished for being so mean and cowardly and cruel, in the hope that he would learn never to do it again. So God will punish you or any of His children who are cowardly enough to tell a lie, or mean enough to do what they have been told not to do, because no one is watching them, or cruel enough to hurt those who are weaker than themselves. But never forget this, that God punishes you, not because He is cross and ill-tempered, but because He is angry at the wicked thing you have done ; not because He wants to give you pain—He cannot bear doing that—but that you may remember the punishment and never be mean or cowardly, selfish or cruel again.

Bear this too in your mind, that the moment you are really sorry for having done wrong and tell Him so, that very moment He forgives you. He will punish you, you may be sure, but be patient and brave when the time comes. You do not doubt the love of your father or mother, because they have sometimes to give you medicines, because they have to keep you shut up in one room when you are ill. So never let anything tempt you to doubt the love of your Father, God. Once He forgives you, you are forgiven for ever.

He will never say anything to you another day about what you have done wrong and been sorry for, but you yourself will think of it when you are home in heaven. When you are close to Him, and listening to Him as He tells you how He loves you, you will wonder how it was that you could ever have been so foolish and so wicked as to do anything that made Him angry.

The best possible way to be good now, is to think a great deal about your dear Father in heaven. He is always watching you, ever loving you, and taking care of you. When the father and mother you love so much on earth are in the room, you would be afraid to do what is wrong. It is when they are away and cannot see you, that you often forget yourselves and are naughty. But God is never out of the room! So think about Him, and talk to Him very often. In the midst of your play, He is delighted to see you so happy: why not thank Him, then? And at night when you are quietly in bed, and maybe a little star is looking in at your window, when all is hushed and still, talk gently, softly, to our Father in heaven. Tell Him how you love Him, for being so kind and good and patient with you. Tell Him how happy you have been in the day, and

that you mean to try and do always what is right and true. Tell Him how sorry you are for what you have done that was wrong, and ask Him to help you to do better to-morrow.

You can never be afraid of anything, if you come to feel that our Father is always at your side. Is the room dark? What of that? He is there, and you are as safe as in the broadest daylight. As you grow older and become men and women, you may sometimes be in great danger. Perhaps in a hospital where people are dying all around you ~~with~~ some terrible sickness. Perhaps in houses where there has been wickedness and bloodshed; where some of God's own children may be living far away from Him and hating those who love Him. You may be in a ship when the wind is roaring and ~~the~~ water is dashing over it, threatening every minute to send it to the bottom. You may have to fight as a soldier for the honour of your country; be badly hurt, left lying on the field in terrible pain when the fight is over. What if it be so? Nothing can make you fear, as long as you know that God our Father is there beside you. The same dear One that you learnt to love and talk to, in your cot, when you were a little boy, will be

there to talk to still ; and if you die, why, that only means that you would close your eyes for one little minute to open them again directly, to see your dear Father's face as you have often wished to see it, and to find yourself close within His arms for ever.

CHAPTER II.

THE SON OF GOD.

Does it not seem a wonderful thing that though our Father in heaven always is and ever has been so good and kind to His children, nearly all of them in the world should at one time have either forgotten everything about Him, or come to think of Him as something altogether different to what He really was? Yet this was so. Some, instead of praying to Him, used to pray to the sun and moon, as if they were living things and could help them. Others made figures of men or animals, in gold or brass or wood—some very beautiful, some very hideous—and knelt before these, asking their help. Some had studied and knew much more than the rest, and so were looked up to by them. It was these men who taught the people their

religion—they were called Priests. They said there were a great many gods; some few rather kind, but most of them cruel and wicked. These gods delighted to punish men, to do unkind and spiteful things to them and to each other, and no wonder therefore that the people were afraid of them, and dreaded to go near them. Then the priests said, "We will pray to the gods for you, but you must make them presents, or they will be ill-tempered and do you harm." So the people brought gifts to the priests, which they kept and made believe that the gods had received them. And because it was thought that if they gave what they most valued, the gods would be best pleased, the worshippers would sometimes offer their little children to be burnt in the fire, fancying that their terrible screams would please the gods. Perhaps there would be a war, and one side was beaten: then the soldiers who had lost would take the wife or child of their king or some great man, and make a sacrifice to the gods, in the hope that they would aid them in the next battle. Or there would come a great storm, spoiling the fruit-trees and the corn, and leaving little or nothing in the country to eat. This it was thought was because enough had not been given to the gods. so some-

thing very precious was offered them, in hopes of putting them in a good temper again. Even if everything went well with the people, if they were very happy for a long time together, they would be afraid of the gods becoming jealous of them, and so would throw away something that they valued in order to make these deities more satisfied.

You may wonder how men ever could have come to believe such falsehoods as these, how they ever could have so far forgotten all about their Father in heaven. But you must remember that the thing had been going on for thousands of years. Little children had learnt what was false, and they grew up and taught their little ones the same, and so it went on through a weary round of years. It was not so at first. If God's children had listened to what He said, if they had done only what He told them, they would always have kept near to Him, could never have forgotten Him. But they liked to have their own way—they inclined to please themselves rather than Him, and so did what He had told them not to do. Then when it was done they were terribly afraid He would punish them, and instead of going at once to Him as children should do to a

loving father, they ran away. The longer they stayed, the more they feared. They forgot His great love ; they were cowards, afraid of the punishment they knew they deserved. Little by little they learnt to think of Him as some one who was going to punish them always, as some one who was really cruel, who actually took pleasure in giving them pain. So naturally, they tried to get farther and farther from Him, to forget Him altogether, and in time were ready to believe all manner of lies about Him. Thus it was that they came to look upon Him as a bloodthirsty enemy, instead of an all-loving and tender Father.

Thinking in this way the world grew more wicked, more unhappy, till God, who loved His children as well as ever, though they had ceased to love and care for Him, was too grieved to bear it any longer, and He sent one teacher after another, one in this country, another in that, to remind men of their Father, and to lead them back to Him. They told people how it was they had gone wrong. They said, "You have been fancying that God was like yourselves, wicked, cruel, that He was glad to see you unhappy, and that unless you gave Him something He would not be kind to you." They said, "Like as a father pities his own

children, so God pities them that fear Him." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as wool," if only you will come back to your Father and ask Him to forgive you. These teachers or prophets talked a great deal with people who were in trouble, with those who were prisoners and slaves. They cheered them with the assurance that God their Father would one day send a great Deliverer to rescue them from their troubles, some one who would be very strong and yet very gentle.

But time went on, and people were very wicked still, and very unhappy. Some felt wretched because of their sinfulness, and longed and longed for one who would not only tell them how to be good, but help them to be so. Some began to laugh at the idea of praying to false and cruel gods; declared there was no God at all, and that the best thing to be done was to eat and drink and enjoy themselves as much as possible, because death would soon come, and then there was an end of everything. All this took place in countries where there were grand houses and fine pictures, where many books were read, and much beautiful poetry was written, but none of these things brought back to those who enjoyed them the lost knowledge of a Father in heaven. In other

countries the people were still worse off ; they had no books, no one to teach them. They knew nothing at all about God, they fancied there were numbers of wicked spirits about them, always trying to do them harm. Through the air and on the sea, in caves and in the woods, any strange noise that came would terrify them, and make them implore the spirits not to hurt them. Things seemed going from bad to worse ; teachers of the truth had come, but little good had been done. It was as if a candle had been lighted for a moment and then put out ; the darkness was darker than before. All the true teachers, remember, had said the same thing. "There is only one God, even your Father ; you are His own children ; He is close to every one of you, not far away ; pray to Him, give up doing what you know to be wrong, strive and do what is right. The God who made all you see, is only good, is perfectly loving. You are miserable because you try to hide yourself from Him. Why should you fear one who loves you so ? Come back to Him and be happy." These were something like their words, and a few listened and laid them up in their hearts. If it were only true, they thought ; but how were they to come near

to God? Who would show Him to them? They cried to Him, and wearied for an answer. "Oh, if we could but see His face!"

Now, in one country all this time, people knew a great deal more about God than was known in other places. This country was called Palestine: it was where the Jews lived. God had sent them prophet after prophet to teach them the truth, and a great deal of what they taught was written in books, that everyone might learn it or listen to it. God had been very good to the Jews. The first of them, Abraham, He made great and powerful. Because he did God's will, he was promised that one day there should be born in his family, some one who would make the whole world happy and blessed. Abraham's family lived in Palestine; but after many years, owing to food being scarce, they went to Egypt, which was a neighbouring country. Then after a time the Egyptians were very cruel to them, and made slaves of them. At length God sent a great prophet to deliver them—Moses, who, you remember, was hidden by the water-side when a baby. He led the Jews out of Egypt, and brought them safely to the land which God had promised Abraham should be theirs. Once settled there, they

began to forget the loving Father who had taken such care of them. They fell into the wicked practices of the people round about, and at last, like them, worshipped trees and animals and wicked spirits, instead of the one God who had made heaven and earth. The priests, who should have taught them what was true, became worse than those they instructed; prophets came who told lies, and the one thought of priests and prophets seemed to be, how best to keep the people in ignorance of the true God, and how best to get riches and power for themselves. They were like shepherds that killed the sheep instead of taking care of them. "They neither healed that which was sick, nor bound up that which was broken." You must not think that God was leaving His poor children to themselves all this time. Every now and then, there came a true prophet, who tried to call them back to their Father in heaven, but they would not listen, and deliberately chose to do what was evil rather than what was good.

God loved them too well to leave them to themselves. They were His own dear children, He could not lose them. So He punished them very severely. He sent a great king with an army from a land not far off, who destroyed their

towns, killed a great many of the inhabitants, and carried away the rest as slaves to his own city. They were miserable enough now ! They knew well enough how it was that all this trouble had come upon them. If they had not forgotten God their Father, if they had done His bidding, listened to His truth, He would have helped them, and they would have been free still. But they had despised Him and killed his prophets. They had given all their hearts to gods that were silver and gold ; they had become like the gods they pictured to themselves—impure, deceitful, and covetous.

Every man wanted what was not his own. Each one quarrelled with the other, and thus when a strong, united army came against them, they had no faith, no confidence in one another. They had so insulted God, that they dared not have confidence in Him, and they fell a ready prey to their conquerors. These recollections must have made slavery still more bitter to the Jews ; and at length, in their sorrow, they again sought their Father in heaven and asked forgiveness of Him. He did not turn away from them. He has never, will never turn away from any one of His children who is sorry for having done wrong. The moment His

pardon was asked, prophets were sent to say that it was freely given ; that if the wanderers would only return to Him, in due time there should come a King and Deliverer, to free them from their enemies and make them dwell in safety in their own land. Many believed the assurance, and, while mourning their sin and foolishness, they patiently bore their punishment, and waited the coming of the promised Saviour.

Years passed away, till one day there came journeying from the town where they lived, to a little village called Bethlehem, a Jewish carpenter with his wife, whose name was Mary. They were tired when they reached the inn, and were in trouble to find it full, and no room left them in which to pass the night. Room there was none, but the stable of the inn was offered them, and there, rather than travel farther, they determined to rest. During that night there was a baby born, and Mary its mother laid it in the manger, that was soft and warm with the hay that cattle eat. That little baby-boy, whose birthday we keep on Christmas Day, was none other than the Saviour, for whom all the people I have told you about were waiting. He was the Son of God, come to lead men back to their

Father and His. He was to be their true Deliverer, and the King of the whole earth !

When the babe was a week old, He was brought by His parents to the Temple, where the Jews prayed and worshipped God. The name given Him was Jesus. In the Temple was a good old man named Simeon, one of those who had believed what the prophets wrote ; one who was longing to see, before he died, the long-expected Saviour. He took Jesus in his arms and thanked God, saying that the child would prove a light to the whole earth and the glory of his own country. This was good news, was it not ? You remember how the world was in darkness and sin. Could this little child make it brighter ? The Jews were still governed, not by their own kings, but by strangers, often harsh and cruel. Was it possible that this baby, lying in Simeon's arms, could be their king ; could do anything to make them glorious ? Mary heard all that was said, and did not know what to make of it. She thought a great deal about it, and no doubt had hopes that her son might one day be really great. But she knew that whatever was God's will would happen, and would be the best thing that could happen. With that she was content. She went quietly home

to Nazareth with her husband and baby, and here Jesus grew up, learning a great deal, helping his father in the carpenter's shop, being kind and good to everybody, and loved by all.

When Jesus was about twelve years old, Joseph his father and Mary came up to Jerusalem, where a great festival was to be held; Jesus came with them. Travelling was slow and tedious in those days, and when the feast occurred, people in the different towns formed parties and made the journey together to Jerusalem, in covered waggons drawn by oxen. With one such party came Jesus and his parents. After a few days' stay, they started homeward. Jesus was not with them the first day, but they felt sure that He was in one of the other waggons with friends, and would be taken care of. They soon stopped for the night, and then, to their great sorrow, their little boy was missing. No one had seen Him, no one knew anything about Him! Back they went in haste to Jerusalem, fearing that in the streets, crowded for the festival, He might have lost Himself. He was not there. He was not in the market-place. He was not found playing with other boys; but entering the Temple, His parents, to their infinite surprise, saw Him sitting

quietly among the learned men there, listening while they explained the writings of the old prophets, and asking them questions about the passages which He did not as yet understand.

His mother naturally might have scolded Him for having caused so much trouble; but she remembered all the strange things that had been said about Him, and she asked Him softly, "Son, why have you behaved in this way to us? Your father and I have looked for you sorrowing." The Boy gave her a strange answer. He said, "Why did you look for me? did you not know I must be doing my Father's business?" What could He mean? His father's business was in the shop at Nazareth; yes, the business of his earthly father; but the time was coming when He would have to leave His quiet home and go out into the noisy world to tell men about His heavenly Father, God; and it was to prepare for this that He was learning all that He could of the truths which God had taught to the prophets who had preached in old times to the Jews.

Neither His father nor mother understood the Boy's answer; but they had talked often and often over what Simeon had said. They had begun to see that Jesus was different

to most children ; that whenever He could, He would be studying the books of the prophets ; that He was continually praying to God ; that He was more dutiful, more loving, more gentle than any child in Nazareth ; that He thought nothing about Himself, but only of God and other people ; that He seemed only to have one desire, and that was to do what was right, and to do it cheerfully. So home they went again happily to Nazareth.

When Jesus was about thirty years old, a cousin of his, named John, older than himself, came preaching to the people in that part of the country. Great numbers collected to hear him. His words were just those of the old prophets. He said to the Jews, "You think that because you are Abraham's children you can come to no harm. It is of no use that you are his children, if you will not do as he would have you do ! Give up everything that God's law tells you is wrong. Be dutiful, honest, kind, and loving to others ; and be content with what God gives you." But he added something else ; he said, "Give up your sins and turn to God, because a King is coming who will have no one for His subjects but those who set their face against what is sinful and try to do what is right—a King who will

know in one moment, who is really wishing to serve and honour Him, and who is only pretending—one who will be King of the Jews, and will make His people glorious.”

John was a strange, stern man ; he lived very plainly, and wore rough clothing. He was not what some would call loveable ; but the people felt that what he said was true. They began to be ashamed of themselves, to wish that they were ready to meet this King who was coming. Was He to be the Deliverer so long waited for ? Could John himself be He ? While they thought thus, John said plainly to them, “I am not the King ; I am only come to prepare the way for Him. He will soon be here ! make yourselves ready to meet Him !”

Among the people who listened to this preaching, were many who were really sorry that they had forgotten God their Father, and done so much to displease Him ; many there were, too, who had not forgotten Him, but were waiting the fulfilment of His promise to Abraham, and looking for the King, the Deliverer, the Saviour, who should help them to overcome the enemies that oppressed them, the sins that wearied them, and should again show to them the glory of their God, as the prophets said it had been seen

in days long ago. These persons gladly undertook to prepare for the coming of the new King; and to show that from this time they would forsake their sins and become His subjects, they were baptized, or washed, by John on the river-side. There was great excitement among them. Their nation had long been oppressed and trampled down. Now they waited for the One who would, they fancied, bring back to them the greatness that was lost—a King who would lead them to victory, set up His throne in splendour, and make Jerusalem the grandest city in the world!

One evening when John had finished baptizing, Jesus came along the river-side and asked John to baptize Him. John, who felt sure that Jesus was indeed the very King and Deliverer for whom all were waiting, answered, “No, it is I who should be baptized by you!” But Jesus pressed him, and they both went down to the water. As they came up the bank again, the clouds, which were gathering round the evening sun, parted for a moment, and Jesus looked up to the throne of His Father and of our Father; suddenly a dove hovered over Him, and through His heart there thrilled His Father’s voice, “This is my beloved Son!”

There He stood, radiant as He listened to those words—

God's Spirit stirring in His heart, making Him ready, making Him almost impatient to do all His Father's will. Ah! if the prophets who had died, many of them heartbroken, could have seen Him as the sunset bathed Him in its glory! They had dreamt of Him day and night through a weary lifetime. One had told of a Deliverer who should rescue His people from slavery; another had prophesied of a King who should reign gloriously over the whole earth; a third had longed that the great Father in heaven, who so loved His children, would show Himself to them again. All these thoughts and hopes had seemed past and faded as summer flowers. But now they were all to live again, now men were to enter into the full enjoyment of them. Here was a Deliverer who could save, not the people of His own land only, but everybody in the wide world. Here was a King who should reign, not in one small city of the Jews, but in the hearts of all mankind. Here was the Son Himself, come with His own hands to lead the wandering children of His Father back to their heavenly home. Deliverer, King, and Son, Jesus the Christ of God, stood there in the twilight upon the banks of Jordan!

CHAPTER III.

GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

JESUS was now called by His Father to begin the work that lay before Him on earth ; but before telling you something about what that work was, I want you to understand the meaning of His baptism, and of the dove which in its flight hovered over Him.

Moses had taught the Jews to be very clean in everything they did, and in the preparation of all they ate ; to be especially so with anything they brought to offer to God in His temple ; and a great part of the service which the priests carried on there, consisted in cleansing the sacrifices, and washing the basins and cups which were used during the ceremonies. As it was with the things they made use of, so it was to be with their own persons ; these were to be kept

pure and clean by frequent washing. If anyone, even by accident, disobeyed one of the smallest commandments of the law—if, for instance, he touched an animal that had died—he was considered unclean, until he had washed his clothes and bathed himself in water.

The Jews were not a people like us in England, who have new books to read every day. Scarcely any one knew how to write in those times, and to write a book in the way it was then done, took a very long time. How, then, were the people to learn anything? In this way :—God taught them, just as we teach very little children, by showing them pictures. Everything in their daily life, all their services in the Temple, were meant to teach them something ; and when you come to understand all the law given to the Jews, you will see what a beautiful picture-book it makes. The washings that were to be practised in their own homes, the cleansings that were seen in the Temple, made them understand, not only how necessary for their health it was that their bodies should be free from impurity, but that above all things their hearts must be so ; that is to say, that their lives must be pure and holy in God's sight. That they must not lie, or cheat, or steal, must not wish to have what did not

belong to them, must not say unkind things about other people, and must remember that since God was perfectly pure and holy, so must they be too, if they would come near to Him, and live always with Him. Even the best among the Jews, those who really loved God, and tried to obey His law, were often doing something that they were forbidden. Then it was, that after waiting till the evening, after showing that they were sorry for what they had done, they were bidden to wash themselves in water, as a sign that they were forgiven and again clean in God's eyes. The water itself could, of course, do nothing more than cleanse their bodies ; God only could make their hearts pure, and so these continual washings showed them, as it were in a picture, not that any sprinkling of water could change their hearts or make them fit to come into God's presence, but that He in wonderful love had Himself pardoned and purified them, and now bid them wash in pure water *as a sign and proof that He had done so*, to encourage them to feel that they might again draw near to Him as members of His family, as children of His love.

Many years had passed by, and the Jews had forgotten the lesson which had been given them. Many discontinued the

frequent washings and the other observances which Moses had ordered. Some, and these the richer people who thought themselves most respectable, would not give up any of the customs of the old time ; indeed, they became more than ever careful of observing them. But they forgot altogether the lessons that these customs had been meant to teach. They washed their bodies and the vessels that they ate out of, as it was quite right they should ; but they never asked God to make their hearts clean. They would not sit down to eat without washing their hands, but they did not mind, while they were eating, saying unkind and wicked things about their neighbours. They were very attentive in going to the Temple services, and letting others see them saying their prayers ; but they thought nothing of returning to their houses or their shops to lie and cheat till it was time to go again to the Temple !

It was with these persons, who called themselves the religious people, and who would hardly speak to others, that the prophets were so angry. They told them it was of no use to be clean outwardly if their hearts were full of sin ; that though they might deceive their neighbours they could not deceive God, because He saw into their hearts. " All

these pictures that have been shown to your fathers and to you," they said, "these grand services in the Temple, these bowings, these coverings and uncoverings, this blood, this water, were only of use to teach you the lesson that God wanted you to learn ; how pure and holy He was, and how you as His children must be pure and holy too. You would not learn the lesson from these pictures ; now God has sent you prophets to teach it you in words. You call yourselves religious people, but your religion is all a pretence and a sham. Religion is what should bind you close to God and to one another ; your religion keeps you away from God, and allows you to do what is wrong to your neighbour. True religion consists not in going to the Temple services, but in doing kind actions to your poor friends and neighbours because God loves them—not in giving up eating and drinking that others may see how much you respect God's laws, but in forsaking sin, ceasing to lie, to cheat, to use angry words, to show bad tempers, in curing yourself of the habit of saying and doing unkind things to others." All that seems rather harsh to you, perhaps ; but the prophets did not stop there. They went on to say, "Only confess how impure, how sinful you are ; only be sorry for the past ;

only turn again to your dear Father in heaven, and ask Him to make you pure—fight manfully against what is wrong in the future ; then listen to God's message to you : ' I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' ' In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,' saith the Lord thy Redeemer." God our Father, you see, was as full of love as ever. He must punish His children if they did wrong ; but the moment they were sorry, He was so merciful that He forgave them.

It was with such a sermon as the old prophets preached that John stirred up the hearts of the people who went to listen to him in the wilderness. They had said, " Wash you, make you clean ; cease to do evil, learn to do well ; for the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob." John came crying, " The Redeemer is at hand, the King is coming, make yourselves ready !" Those who believed him, those who trusted God's promise to save them, he baptized and washed by the river-side. He meant by it, that they had confessed their sins,

had promised to serve God and keep His commandments, and their baptism spoke to them like this : " You are God's ; He has accepted your sorrow, He has pardoned your sin."

But you will say, perhaps, "Why, then, was Jesus baptized? Was He sinful? Did He want cleansing?" He could not, because He had always lived close to His Father, God. All His lifetime He had only sought to do His will, and had never let a sinful thought stay for one moment in His heart. Jesus, then, had no sins to confess ; He could not want cleansing ; but He was a Jew, born of Jewish parents in a Jewish country, and He ever paid reverence to the customs which God had appointed ; so when John hesitated to baptize Him, He pressed him, because He said, He had come to do all things that were written in the law.

There was another reason, I think, why Jesus was baptized. The Jews were looking for a Saviour who should free them from their Roman masters, for a King who should sit down upon his throne in Jerusalem. Jesus was indeed Saviour and King, but in a far grander way than his countrymen had any idea of. He was going to save the world from its sins ; He was going to set up His throne in every pure and lowly heart that would receive Him. Now He intended to continue

this practice of washing with water, this baptism, as a proof that God had freely forgiven those who received it, and made them holy; and further, it was to be to all people a sign that they were Christ's own disciples or servants; that they were children in the one family of God, our dear Father in heaven. So it was, that before He went back to God, Jesus sent His friends out into the world to tell men the glad news which He had brought them, and to baptize every creature. There is nothing which Jesus has told us to do, but He did it first Himself; so He, the Son of God and our Elder Brother, was baptized that He might say to us, "Do as I have done; do it because you love me; do it as proof to men that I am your Saviour and King."

You remember that as Jesus came up from the water a dove fluttered over Him, and the voice of His Father whispered, "Thou art my beloved Son." He had known full well before, that He was God's Son, because the Spirit within Him sought after God, and had always urged Him to do God's will. But here was His Father's own voice calling to Him as His Son; here was this soft, tender little bird that seemed to bring Him a message, as it were, from the sky above Him, an angel from heaven to cheer Him and

to strengthen. He knew that the path on which He was starting would be a sad one; that His countrymen, whom He longed to save, would hate and despise Him when He, the poor carpenter's son, claimed to be their King. He remembered how cruelly used had been the prophets who came before. He had read in his quiet home of Nazareth, of Elijah fleeing for his life, of Jeremiah standing before the princes, while the priests shouted, "This man is worthy to die!" and the lonely and painful life before Him may well have chilled His heart, and led Him, as it did later, to pray to His Father to spare Him, if it were possible, so great sorrow.

The answer to all this came just when it was most wanted. God knew how Jesus, of His own free will, would choose a life of sorrow and a death of pain, that He might lead men back to the Father they had lost, and so before He entered on that life, God sent to Him this visible message of His love, and with His own voice stirred up His own Spirit within His Son.

How that voice must have gladdened the heart of Jesus! Have you ever been left in the dark where you were frightened? or been in some dangerous place, where if you

had made a wrong step you would have fallen and hurt yourself? At that very moment your father's voice or your mother's was heard, "Don't be afraid, darling, I am close beside you!" Did not those words make you feel brave again, even joyful and happy? All that and ten thousand times more God's voice was to Jesus, and it made Him, as you will see presently, brave and strong in the troubles that were close at hand.

Here, then, was something that Jesus gained by His baptism: He had done His Father's will, and this was a reward. He had honoured God by observing His law on earth, and now He had received honour from God in heaven. The voice which Jesus heard was the voice of God's Spirit within His heart. It is that same Spirit which, as the greatest gift Jesus could gain for men, He did gain, by His life and death on earth. It was not that God had left men altogether without His Spirit, even before the coming of Christ. There were good men in all countries, you remember, who sought to know God, and to learn the truth about Him. These men were guided by His Spirit, and some of them got very near to Him. But for all that they never learnt really what He was. They were like

"children crying in the night, and with no language but a cry." And to these children, wearied with disappointment, came Jesus, bringing, as His own gift, a spirit which taught them to call the great God whom they had hardly dared to approach, "OUR FATHER"! Mind you, it was just because they were children of God, just because Jesus was the Son of God, that the Spirit which by Him was sent forth taught them to call upon a Father. They had cried before now to sun and moon, to birds and beasts, to spirits which they fancied were in the air, and sea, and woods; but this Spirit which Jesus brought them, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, led them to recognize in the Almighty one whom they had so long feared and dreaded, a gentle and tender Father, who only waited to fold them in His arms. Their own sin and the spirit of evil had made them afraid of God, with the slavish fear which a dog has for a cruel master; the Spirit which Jesus gave them encouraged in them the simple, trusting love which a child should have for its parents.

Do you know what it is to have the spirit of Jesus? If you saw a boy hurt another by accident, and the one so hurt turned round spitefully on the other and struck him, you would say, what a revengeful spirit he had. If a man

were seen ill-using a horse or a dog, you would say, what a cruel spirit must be in that man ! In the same way if anyone is kind and gentle, thoughtful for others, always ready to give up his own way and his own pleasure, patient when he is provoked, answering kindly when he is spoken to roughly, brave and fearless in danger, making what is around him bright and happy; striving to honour God in all he does, praying to Him, and asking His help every day, you may be sure that that man, woman, or child, has the spirit that was in Jesus, even the Spirit of God.

With that Spirit striving in his heart, the man must grow more like Jesus. He may often fall, often do what is sinful when he is tempted, but be sure of it he will not sleep until his sin is pardoned by our Father in heaven. He will be baptized over and over again, not in water, but with his own tears. The tears cannot wash away his impurity, but they will be to him the sign that all that impurity *has been washed away*, because of a Father's love declared in His Son Jesus Christ.

You see what a great thing your baptism is ! It is not a conjuror's trick ; it is not something that finds you black and leaves you white. It is as far above all that, as heaven

is above earth. It declares that you are God's own little child, that His Holy Spirit is in your heart, and always has been ; that if you will only follow its whispers, you will grow to be like Jesus, and share in all the glory that He has now received from His Father. It declares that Jesus is your Saviour and King ; that He will save you from your selfishness and sin, and save you to the end ; that you are bound to serve and honour Him ; that you are His soldier, under promise to fight for Him till the end of your life comes, and with His own hands He places on your head a crown of victory.

You often feel inclined to do what is wrong, do you not ? That is because a wicked spirit tempts you. If you were to listen to it, you would soon become deceitful, selfish, and cruel. It would lead you from one thing to another, till you became afraid of God your Father, and ran into deeper, darker sin, in the hope of escaping from Him. Give no ear but to the voice of God's Holy Spirit. You will hear it very often. You may be alone in a room. There is something there you have been told not to touch. You begin looking at it, you long to touch it. You are just going to do so when in a moment, there comes, you don't

know where from, something like a voice that says, "Don't touch it, it would be wrong!" Ah, you thought you were alone, but you are not! Your Father, God, is watching; it is His Spirit in your heart that you hear. Always listen to that voice, and do as it bids you. Every time you do so, you will bring a smile of love on the face of our dear Father in heaven, and you will make the heart of Jesus leap for joy. Always pay attention to it, and as you grow older it will sound more and more clearly. By and by, when you have grown to be a man or woman, there will be times when you hardly know what to do, which way to take. The night may be dark, the way may be slippery, but you need have no fear. If you have obediently followed the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, the same voice that has spoken to you so long, will say, in a tone that you cannot mistake, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The road may be long or short, bright and sunny, or dark and cloudy, but be sure that, whatever it be, it will bring you safely to our Father's home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS.

You have seen how Jesus was strengthened and encouraged by God, before beginning the hard work He had set Himself to do. You might fancy He would have been anxious to go at once into the world and tell men of their Father in heaven. Instead of this, He went away into the wilderness, and prayed. John had lived there a great part of his life ; he was a hardy, rough man ; he ate the simplest food and drank nothing but water. He did not care to have people about him, he liked to be alone with God in the desert, till when God's Spirit bid him, He came along the river-side and taught the crowds who gathered to listen to him. The life of Jesus had up to this time been very different. His had been a bright, happy home, made

so by loving parents, friends, and relations. As a boy, He had had plenty of companions of His own age, and many a time the streets of the little town of Nazareth echoed with their laughter as they ran home from school. Growing up to be a man, His life had still been a cheerful one. There was His daily work to occupy Him ; there were the old sayings of Moses and the prophets, which He loved so much, to think about and learn. There was His mother, with her fond love of Him, and brothers and sisters for company.

He tore Himself away from a place where He had been so happy, and went into the wilderness, where there were no friends to speak to, no house to live in, no food to eat. He went there, that He might be quite alone for a time with His Father, God ; that He might pray to Him without interruption, talk much with Him, and think over the work which He had undertaken. The carpenter's tools were laid aside, the noise of the workshop was hushed, the music of his mother's "good night" sounded no longer in His ears. He was alone with God. Day after day, night after night passed, and found Him still praying, still thinking. He had forgotten how the time went, His only thought was about His Father, and how He could bring men back to Him.

While He was thus preparing Himself, God was preparing Him for a great battle with a strong and wicked enemy, an enemy so strong that no one had yet been able to conquer him. Can you tell with whom Jesus had to fight? It is a sad story, and I wish I had not to tell it you. No one in the world half understands it, only God knows about it, and He sees the end of it, which may not come for thousands of years yet, just as clearly as He saw its beginning, which happened many thousands of years ago.

Well then, long before there was sun or moon, summer or winter, rain or sunshine in this world, God, our Father, lived, as He ever has done, ever will do, in heaven, bright and good and glorious, with thousands of thousands of angels whom He had made, loving Him and doing His will always. These angels He did not treat as slaves, *making* them do this thing or the other, but He dealt with them just as He does with His children on earth. They knew His will, and He left them freely to do it for the love of Him. Some, sad to say, began to think more about themselves than they did about God, and then, as soon as ever they did that, evil thoughts came into their hearts. They wanted to do their own will instead of God's; they became envious of each

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other, and even of God Himself! God was obliged to punish them, as you know He has always to do when His children do wrong. He sent them away from Him—away from all that they had loved in heaven; no longer could they walk along the golden streets or join in the hymns of praise that were sung around His throne.

And ever since, those angels have been sinning more and more. They were disobedient, and then they were afraid. They ceased to think of God as their Father; made up their minds to believe that He had been harsh and cruel. Little by little they grew worse, till at last, dreadful as it seems, they hated Him, and tried to do Him harm. Up to this hour those angels have never confessed their fault; up to this hour they are away from God. Before ever they can come back to Him, you may be sure that our Father and theirs must visit them with some fearful punishment!

Most richly do they deserve it, for not only have they been hating God, but they have been whispering lies about Him to His children on earth. These were at one time without sin; they loved God, and did as He bid them; but a time came when they fancied their own way better than they loved their Father's will. They did wrong over and over

again, and God punished them for it, but, instead of being sorry, they grew like the wicked angels, self-willed and proud and disobedient, and their own hearts were ready to believe what the evil spirits said to them. "God is harsh and cruel, don't go near Him, He will only punish you. What is the use of praying to Him? He will not hear you, He will not help you."

You have seen how, as time went on, most of the people in the world accepted these lies; how they forgot all that was true about God, did all kinds of cruel and wicked things, and prayed to evil spirits because they were terribly afraid of them. Yet to everyone of these sinful, wandering children, God had given His Spirit; but instead of hearkening to its voice they had listened to themselves and their own fancies, they had let the evil spirits they prayed to come into their hearts and dwell there; and just as you saw how people who tried to do God's will, who thought a great deal about Him, and attended to the voice of His Spirit, grew more and more like Him, so you can easily understand how those who allowed wicked spirits to remain in their hearts, who thought about them, talked with them, prayed to them, became more and more wicked themselves. Thus

it was that the world had gone from bad to worse. The true God was forgotten. Evil spirits, Satan the chief among them, seemed to have it all his own way ; it was as if he had built up a throne upon earth, and had set God at defiance ; it was his spirit, the spirit of cruelty, falsehood, impurity, that had the place of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of men !

Though God's foolish, sinful children let this false spirit get power over them, they felt very often that he was a cruel and a harsh tyrant ; what he encouraged them to do did not make them happy. They felt that after all they were but his slaves, and their hearts sunk within them sometimes, when it flashed upon them, " Perhaps we are his slaves for ever ! " Every now and then, amid these sad thoughts, came a voice, the voice of God's Holy Spirit, which had never left their hearts—the cries and shrieks of the evil spirits had nearly drowned it, but sometimes it *would* be heard, though it was but faint,—like a whisper coming over mountains of sin and wickedness—" Why not break away from this cruel slavery ? Why not go back to God ? " Prophets came and said the same thing. " This evil spirit is not your true King, he is a usurper ; tear off the chains with which he has bound you,

and acknowledge God as the true sovereign of your hearts." Most people heard all this as if they were in a dream. Evil spirits had sung them to sleep; but many were aroused. They sighed, and wished "Oh that we could be free! Oh that we could go back to God!" But who would deliver them from the chains of their sin? Who would show God to them? They heard of Him as a King, but they had rebelled against Him, and kings of the earth only killed and destroyed those who disobeyed them. Would the King of heaven be different? They heard of a Deliverer; but would He trouble Himself to deliver *them*? Perhaps He might deliver the princes and nobles, and the great men of the earth; but as for them, they must be too poor for Him to care for, too mean even for Him to think of. The thought, you see, even of a Deliverer could hardly rouse them; the thought of a King only made them afraid. Prophets and teachers had failed; it was necessary that *a son* should come, *the Son* of God, because He only could tell them of His Father and their Father, of the unchanging love which He had for all His children, and how He longed to bring them back to Him.

Thank God He had come at last! Satan had made

himself king in the world, but here was a stronger than he, come to overthrow him. Evil spirits had made slaves of men, but here was the Deliverer who would throw off their chains, who would give to all men power to forsake sin, to abandon bad habits and tempers, to live as God's dear children by the help of His Holy Spirit, loving, trustful, and free. The Son would make them free, and they would be free indeed !

Before Jesus could set men free, He needed to overcome the power of every evil spirit that had helped to enslave them. He went into the wilderness that sin might do its worst on Him. In solitude, loneliness, and weariness, fierce temptations would be sure to suggest themselves. If He could not conquer these, if He once yielded to anything that wicked spirits proposed to Him, how could He hope to deliver His brethren on earth from their power? Never forget that Jesus was of like passions with ourselves; that He knew what hunger and thirst meant, just as we do; that He could be weary, low-spirited, and sad; that He would much rather have made friends than enemies; that in doing God's work, He had constantly to struggle against the weakness of His nature, the inclination to rest rather than to work, the sugges-

tions that were made to Him to use His power as the Son of God, and instead of coming to men in poverty, meekness, and self-denial, to order bands of angels from heaven to punish those who would not acknowledge Him as their King.

He was by Himself in the desert ! Far from His home, no mother's voice, no brother's or sister's to say one loving word. He had been days and nights without food, He was well-nigh wearied out and fainting ! The voice of an evil spirit whispered, "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread !" Jesus must have been startled. It was not that He had not heard a voice such as this before. He had not been without temptation as a boy ; but there was something horrible about it in this perfect stillness, and when He had thought Himself alone with His Father.

"*If* Thou be the Son of God." Jesus knew that He was. He had known it when He walked by Mary's side, when His hammer was heard in Joseph's workshop. He could never doubt that He was the Son of God while the memory lasted of that evening by the river-side, and the white dove nestling to Him. He might, from the very first, have shown to the world His God-like power. He might have come forth

hidden in a thunder-cloud, and with the lightning for his sword have destroyed all who opposed Him. But Jesus came not to destroy men, but to save them; to show them God's love and tenderness, and to lead them to the Father from whom they had gone so far astray. He had come on earth, not only the Son of God, but the Son of Mary, that He might have exactly the same weak body that we have, suffer every trouble, every temptation that we have to bear, in order that He might overcome them by the Spirit of God His Father, and having gained for us that same Spirit which made Him a conqueror, might make every one of us, His brothers and sisters, conquerors too.

“Command that these stones be made bread!” There could surely be no great harm in that. He was faint with hunger, and far from home. He might have had food enough and to spare if He had only used the Divine power. He could have been supplied with everything, had He but called to His Father. It was because of this that the temptation was so strong. It was as if the Evil One said, “Let me see you do something. You say you are the Son of God; how can that be? Here I find you, worn out, and fainting with hunger. Is that the way God leaves

His Son? Have not I well told men that He is harsh and cruel, when He will not even give you bread?"

The struggle in the heart of Jesus was a bitter one, and He must have shuddered as He heard the derisive, mocking laugh of an evil spirit; but He answered him very firmly and quietly. "Would you have me believe that children of God live only to eat and drink? No; they live to do their Father's will. I am here in the place where God would have me be; His Spirit bid Me come here, and if I die of hunger, God's will be done." You see, He would not answer the "if." He was so certain that God was His own dear Father, that the same spirit was in them both and made them one, that neither man nor devil should induce Him to take notice of such a sneer.

In a moment, the scene before Jesus was changed. He seemed to be no longer in the wilderness, but standing high on a pinnacle of the Temple in the busy city of Jerusalem. Below Him, He could see the squares and streets and the people as they passed along. He was at a height that might well have made Him giddy to look down from, for with a single false step He must have been dashed in pieces. A voice said, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast

Thyself down ; for it is written, ' He shall give His angels charge of Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' " The evil spirit was trying again, and he began with the same sneer as before, "*if*," for he had seen, no doubt, how it had wounded Jesus to the heart. "Cast Thyself down." He meant, "It is a very easy thing to *say* you are 'the Son of God.' Do you think I will believe it? Do you think those people down in the street there will believe it? Are you different to anyone else? If you are, prove it. Throw yourself down ! God will surely take care of His own Son ! and then everyone will see that you are what you pretend to be !"

Jesus stood gazing into the street. Below, were the people He had come to save. He was about to go to them as the carpenter's son from Nazareth, and ask them to accept Him as the Saviour and King of Israel ! He felt too sure of what was coming ; He knew that His countrymen would laugh at and mock Him. Over and over again this terrible temptation that He was struggling with, would meet Him. You remember how the priests and the people said afterwards at different times, "Is not this

the carpenter's son?" "Whom makest Thou Thyself?" "Show us a sign, that we may believe in Thee?" "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him!" The thought must have passed through the mind of Jesus, "How different it might all be, if He did as the voice bid Him do." He had only to pray to His Father, and He would have sent a whole army of angels, in the midst of which, the Son might have descended safely to the ground. He might have entered Jerusalem in triumph as the promised Deliverer and King of Israel. The priests and the great men and the religious people would have come in procession and paid court to Him in the hope of reward; incense would have been waved before Him, flowers would have been strewn along His path, banners would have waved, trumpets would have sounded; amid shouts of triumph He would have passed through the city, and sat down on a golden throne in the house of David! Was not all that more attractive than the life Jesus had chosen for Himself? Poor and despised, often hungry and without a place to lay His head, He used sometimes to say that the foxes and the birds were better off than He!

But Jesus, you know, had come to earth not to please Himself, but to do His Father's will. Not to be a King like David, conquering His enemies with the sword, but a King ruling by love in the hearts of all men, in all lands, in all time. The sword could destroy men's lives, it could not drive out the wicked spirits from their hearts, and in the place of these, bring the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. There was but one way in which that could be done. Jesus must show how that blessed Spirit gave Him power to conquer sin, and every temptation that could happen to Him ; and how, because He did so conquer, God would give that same Spirit to all His children—the Spirit of the Father, that they, like Him, might hate sin, and love all that was good and holy—the Spirit of the Son, that they might look up to the great God as their loving Father, that they, like Jesus, might always keep near Him, do His will and not their own ; live a life of lowliness, gentleness, and love, not thinking about themselves, but doing good to others, and giving glory always to God.

So Jesus turned, and said sternly to the tempter, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God." "True He has promised to be near to every one of His children, in danger,

when He allows danger to overtake them ; but He can never be pleased if they run into danger just that they may show off before others, and let it be thought that God's children may do anything they please." As Jesus spoke, the evil thought vanished. He had conquered a second time !

But He was to be tried once more. The streets of Jerusalem became dim and shadowy, and presently faded from His view. He was sitting, as He thought, upon a high mountain, and all around, turn which way He would, a magnificent picture met His view. The greatest cities in the world were there ; their streets crowded with caravans ; squares and gardens, full of the most stately trees and brilliant flowers. Temples of marble towered up toward the sky, fountains were playing, birds of every colour were singing joyfully. Here there came a train of camels laden with the most precious gifts ; there through the gates marched a splendid army, their banners blazing in the sunshine, their leaders on horses covered with golden trappings. Music was heard everywhere, the shops were full of beautiful things, crowds of people were passing through the broad handsome streets, and chatting to each other as they met.

Through the gateway of a palace built of marble of all colours, could be seen a magnificent hall painted in gold and crimson and blue, where, on a throne of ivory studded with rubies, sat a king in his robes of state ; round him stood great men and nobles, they brought him whatever he asked for, did for him whatever he ordered.

Jesus sat there, all this grandeur before Him, and the Evil One broke in upon His thoughts. "I have heard you called King of Kings ; now you may be so if you like. All these things, the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, shall be yours if you will fall down and worship me !" What would you have said ?

It was a lie, mark you, to begin with. Satan had no power apart from God ; these things were not his to give. It was God's world, not his, and Jesus faced him in such an outburst of anger as he well deserved. "Worship you ! You, the open enemy of my Father ! You, who have done your best to make this glorious world of His, dark as night, and foul with every sin ! You, a liar, who have told falsehood after falsehood about my Father to His children ! Away with you ! Get you hence, Satan ! Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Satan slunk

away before such a torrent of holy anger ; Jesus was left alone. Every unholy thought vanquished, every wicked spirit that had tempted Him conquered. But the struggle had been a terrible one ; He *had suffered*, being tempted.

Always remember that He suffered, suffered ten thousand times more than you can have any idea of. He so loved His Father, and so hated everything that was unholy, impure, and false, that any thought of evil was horrible to Him, gave him actual and terrible pain. Every such thought came from evil spirits who had insulted His Father, who were spreading sin and wretchedness in the hearts of men ; who helped to keep them from coming back to God, and to the loving arms of Jesus, that their sins might be forgiven. What would you say if you saw some one ill-treating your parents, insulting them, telling lies about them, calling them by terrible names, trampling and spitting on them ? And what, if that some one were to come and ask you to do as he was doing, to join him in thus treating those that you love so much ? Would you not be horrified, and shudder ? Would you not turn from him as a foul and loathsome thing ? Would you not struggle with him with all your strength, no matter how much he hurt you ?

Jesus was fearfully hurt, and it is because He suffered so much when tempted, that He feels as He does for you when evil spirits try to make you do what is wrong. They will tempt you just as they did Jesus ; in one way when you are little, in other ways when you grow to be men and women. They may try to make you greedy, care more for, and think more about, nice things than about your work, your reading, or even your play. When they do, answer them as Jesus did. Say, "I have something to do besides eating and drinking. I have to do the work that God has given me. I am to eat and drink only as much as is good for me, that I may be strong and fight for God.

Sometimes an evil spirit will whisper, "Oh, you are sure to be taken care of, if you are God's little child, so it does not matter what foolish things you do ; don't be afraid, go with those boys who laugh at God, and do not believe in Jesus. Show them that you can play with them ; join in all that they do, and be none the worse for it." Say to him as Jesus did, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Don't do what you know your Father would not like you to do. He has promised to keep you safe from sin, if only you will go in the way that He chooses for you. If you run

out of that path, if you make your constant friends and playmates of those who do not love God, **He** will let you see how weak you are without Him. When you are tempted, the power to resist sin will be wanting.

Another time, you may be tempted to say, "Oh, if I had but everything in the world!" The wicked thought will come, that you might have this pretty thing or the other, if only you will do something wrong, in order to get it. Tell a lie, perhaps; do something that you have been told not to do; go somewhere where you have been told not to go. Telling lies and being disobedient is worshipping the devil! It is doing what a false, hateful spirit bids you do, instead of what God would have you do. It is as much as if you said, "I will have no more of my loving and tender Father. I will say my prayers to this dark and cruel spirit!" Oh, if ever you are tried like that, then is the time of all others to be angry. Turn on the Evil One as Jesus did when on the mountain-top. Tell him to begone, for that you worship only your Father in heaven; that you will have no devil for your master.

Often and often through your lifetime, evil spirits will try you with that sneer with which Jesus was tried. "*If*" thou

be the Son of God. Jesus would not even notice that. Be like Him, and don't trouble to answer it. You know you are one of God's dear children ; did not baptism assure you of it? Not a son of God? Why, who is it that has taken care of you all this time since you were a baby? Who gives you your daily bread, in answer to your little prayer to Him as "our Father?" Who makes you strong and well and happy? Who is it that will punish you if you do wrong? Whose voice is it that whispers in your heart when you are tempted to sin, "Don't!" Ah, you cannot help being a child of God, when His Spirit is in your heart, trying to make you like your Father. So, then, do not answer when men or spirits taunt you with this "if," but say to yourself, "*Because I am His son*, God has sent His Spirit into my heart, teaching me to call Him Father."

These evil spirits will be a terrible trouble to you, *but never be afraid of them*—no, not if a thousand of them were tempting you at once. You, like Jesus, can conquer them, one and all. You are a son of God, you have the Spirit of God to help you. You have only to trust yourself entirely to God your Father ; only pray Him, every day you live, to give you more of His Spirit, that you may grow like Christ,

and no wicked thought, no evil spirit can ever master you. You will be beaten sometimes ; too often you will give in to sin, because you are still so unlike Jesus. You are fond of your own way, you even take a pleasure in being naughty sometimes, but you will be sad and sorry afterwards. Do not be disheartened, though you may be—ought to be—sad when you have done wrong. Go at once to your Father, God, and ask Him to forgive you for His love's sake in Jesus. Tell Him you will try and fight harder against bad tempers and passionate words. Take any punishment you may get, patiently and bravely, because you know you deserve it, and love Him even while He punishes.

When the temptation had been met and overcome, Jesus was utterly worn out with His struggle. His Father, God, did not leave Him, but sent to Him messengers of comfort, with an abundance of strength and peace. God will do as much for you. Every time you conquer an inclination to do wrong, you will be the happier and brighter. You will get nearer, ever nearer, to your Father in heaven ; and if only you could see His face, there would be such a smile of love upon it, as would more than repay you for the hard fight that you had had with sin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS.

SOME time after His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus left Nazareth, where He had dwelt since His childhood, and came to live in a town called Capernaum, on the shore of the lake of Galilee—a large inland piece of water, more like what we call a sea than a lake, passing sometimes by the names of the Sea of Gennesareth and the Sea of Tiberias. Capernaum itself was not a very large place, but it was within a few miles of one of the most important cities of the Jews, Tiberias, and it was surrounded by many villages, among which were Bethsaida and Chorazin. Along the side of the lake were many small towns and villages, the latter occupied mostly by fishermen, who, like we see them now, were a simple, hardy, and industrious set of people,

toiling often day and night for their living. There were a great number of little ships kept along the coast for fishing and other purposes, and had you stood any summer day upon the shore, the scene before you would have been busy and animated enough. The country round was not beautiful, and the hills that rose up, some of them nearly from the water's edge, were dull and uninteresting—mere mountains of sand, full of holes, only fit for the birds and foxes, who made their homes there. To this town of Capernaum it seems that the family of Jesus had moved, and it was here that He now commenced His public teaching. He began just as the earlier prophets had done. “Repent!” Be sorry for your sins, forsake them, cease to do evil, learn to do well,” because “the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” A kingdom, you know, means the country and the people that are ruled by a king. So nowadays there is the kingdom of Sweden, of Italy, of Spain. Each of these countries, and the people who live in them, form the kingdom of Sweden, Italy, or Spain. In the same way the Kingdom of Heaven was to include all the countries and all the people whose King was the King of heaven. Evil spirits had been kings in the world, and the end of their

rule was darkness, wretchedness, and sin ; now a new King, even Jesus, was coming to overthrow their cruel power, to free men from their bondage, and to set up His own kingdom in the hearts of men. In all kingdoms of the world, anyone who wishes may become *naturalized*: that means, that although he may have been born in a place a long way off, he may, if he please, become a subject of any particular king ; he may become so, by obeying certain laws which that king has made, and attending to certain rules which he has laid down. Having done that, he is made a member of the new kingdom, he has a right to claim protection from his sovereign, and is bound to fight for him if called upon by him to do so. Jesus said to all men, Come and be "naturalized" in the kingdom of heaven : if you would be, you must obey God's first law, which is "Repent," give up your sin, then God indeed will be your God, and you shall be His people.

Of the fishermen who lived along the lake of Galilee, many, no doubt, had heard about Jesus. One day, as He was walking along the sea-shore, He saw two brothers, named Simon and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea. He only said to them "Follow me," and they left their nets

and went with Him. There must have been something very gentle and winning in His manner, to attract two rough, weather-beaten men like these, but no doubt they were led in a great measure by curiosity; they had heard their friends tell of the new teacher, and they were eager to know what He had to say. A little farther on there was a ship lying, in which the fishermen were mending their nets. This ship belonged to a man named Zebedee, whose sons, James and John, were working with him. These two also Jesus called, and they left their father with the sailors, and followed with Simon and Andrew. They must have gone home with Jesus, listened to His teaching, and accepted Him as the promised Deliverer for whom their country was waiting, for almost immediately we find Jesus and these four friends going round into the towns and villages, preaching the good news of God, how He had at length given to His people a Saviour and a King.

Jesus said very much what the old prophets had said, but it was in quite a different way. They had come to men as God's servants, but He spoke to them as *the Son of God* and as a King who had a right to command. This was what astonished the people so much. They had been

accustomed to hear the law of Moses read in the synagogue on their sabbath-day. They looked upon Moses as their great teacher and master, but Jesus came telling them to give up many things that Moses had commanded. He spoke as if He were far above Moses, as if He were giving them new laws, which were to take the place of those they had received from their fathers. Moses had said, "Thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thine enemy." Jesus said, "Hate no one ; love ye your enemies ; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." The great people among the Jews, the Pharisees as they were called, thought that because they attended very carefully to all the observances of the law, they would ensure God's favour. This new teacher said they were only deceiving themselves ; that His followers must do something more than that, if they would enter His kingdom. The so-called religious people among the Jews were fond of repeating their prayers in places where they could be seen by everyone ; but Jesus bid his friends, when they prayed, go into their room, that no eye but their Father's in heaven might see. These people would do anything in the world to make others say how religious they were. If they gave

money to the Temple or to the poor, their first thought was, "How shall we let the people know about it?" They had not the means that people use nowadays; no newspapers in which their names could appear, as giving so much to build a new church or chapel, or to feed the poor; so they used to send their money in bags to the priest with a man blowing a trumpet, in order that everyone might say, "Who is that sending money to the poor? What a quantity he gives away!" The Jews had been accustomed to keep fasts as well as feasts; that is, they not only rejoiced and praised God, but they expressed sorrow for having offended Him. This was taught them, like everything else, by pictures. When they rejoiced they were to dress in their best, to eat better food. When they were mourning, on the other hand, they put on a plainer dress, or disarranged or neglected the one they wore, and went without food for a time. The Scribes and Pharisees used to take pains that people might know they fasted very often, and think how much they served God. They were careful to show themselves frequently in the streets with slovenly dress and disfigured faces, so that others passing might say, "How religious those people are!" And because they were so very religious, they

thought it was for them to look down on others. People who were not seen regularly in the Temple or synagogue they would hardly speak to ; those who were not seen giving money, or heard making long prayers, they would actually say were cursed !

All this was hateful to Jesus, and He spoke of it in bitter, withering words. Everything that was false, deceitful, hypocritical, aroused His anger at once. He used plain words to these religious people, these false teachers of their countrymen—words that no one could have dared to use but the One who had come to discover all the secrets of men's hearts. While they outwardly obeyed God's laws, Jesus knew that their hearts were full of evil spirits. The spirits of pride, selfishness, cruelty, were all there, teaching them to look down upon others as not so good as themselves ; to seek to be great and rich and powerful ; to neglect their duty of being loving, kind, and tender to the poor about them. Where was there room in their hearts for the Spirit of God ? How could they, who said they had done nothing that was wrong, that they had fulfilled every commandment of God's law, become naturalized in the kingdom of heaven, of which the first law was, "Repent !" Jesus came to

show them their Father, God, and they turned from Him haughtily, saying, "Abraham is our Father." Jesus told them that He was the Son of God, who would free them from the slavery of their sins. They answered, "We were never in bondage to any man." "Thou hast a devil, and art mad!"

You see there was all the difference in the world between these Jewish teachers and Jesus, and I want you clearly to understand what it was. They thought a great deal of their picture-book, the law of Moses, but they had altogether forgotten what the pictures signified. They washed their hands, and imagined they had pleased God. It never struck them that washing was to remind them how impure and unholy their hearts were. They fasted, and made themselves look ridiculous, and fancied that God would reward them for being so religious; but, instead of doing what this picture was intended to teach them, viz. that they must humble themselves before God, confess, and forsake their sins, they positively went about thanking God that they were without sin! Their own wish was to appear religious to other people, and how they managed this has been already shown. You will see, I think, that such

conduct was not only wicked, but very absurd. Just as if God had been one of themselves, as if they could succeed in deceiving Him, as they did their neighbours and friends ! Every thought of their heart was known to Him ; He knew perfectly that it was not for the love of Him that they gave money to the poor, that they went so often to church, and repeated so many long prayers that they never thought about—did not half understand. That was not what He wanted. He longed for them to know Him and love Him, to give Him their heart, to receive the Spirit which He had sent to them by His Son.

Jesus came not to tell them to do this or that, but to bring them the Spirit of God their Father, to give them His own Spirit, the Spirit of the Son. When they let that Spirit come into their hearts and take possession of it, they would love to do their Father's will like dear children. They would not pray to God because they were ordered to do so, but because they could not help talking to one of whom they were so fond. They would not give money to the poor that God might reward them, but because all they had was God's, and lent them to do good with. And when they had no money, they would give—what is sometimes much more

wanted—a kind look, a gentle word. Jesus came to bring all men into His kingdom ; as members of it they would obey His laws and take Him in everything for their example ; they would look on all as their brethren, because fellow-subjects of the same King, citizens of the same country.

Jesus did not give His disciples a book full of written laws, to study and obey. *He bid them copy Him* ; that was their religion, that was what would bind them for ever to their Father, God. No need any longer for the great picture-book of ceremonies which God had given to the Jews. There was but one simple rule in the kingdom of Jesus, “ Do as I have done.”

Jesus did a great deal more than talk mere words to the people. “ He went about doing good.” By the might of God’s Spirit He healed the sick, made the lame to walk, the blind to see, and awakened those who had slept the sleep of death. He never thought of Himself ; His only aim was to make people better and happier. It was the same in little things as in great ; whether He was at a wedding feast or restoring to a poor broken-hearted woman her only son. Wherever He came, it was as if sunshine had found

its way into a cold, darkened room. There was no noise, no roughness about Him. He was gentle, peaceful, and quiet. At the sound of His footsteps, hearts that were bursting with sorrow became happy, eyes that were blinded with tears, looked for Him in adoring love. You remember the poor blind men that He passed by the wayside. Their life had been dark and sad, but Jesus was coming, and they believed that He had the power to cure them. They cried aloud to Him, and He asked, "What will ye that I should do unto you?" They longed for sight, longed to see their Deliverer and King. Jesus touched their eyes, and a new world was open to them ;—the sky and grass, the birds and flowers, the crowds of people standing round. But above all these things, they saw the loving face of their Saviour, and they joyfully followed Him along the way. Think again of the disciples in the storm on the lake of Galilee, the night as black as could be, nothing to be seen but the white crested waves dashing against each other and threatening every moment to upset the little ship. They had given up all for lost ; their wives and little children were in their thoughts ; it was very bitter to be drowned so near to home. Listen ! What are those words that reach

them, amid the dash of the sea and the roar of the storm ? "It is I, be not afraid !" Jesus had come to them walking on the sea, and the moment He stepped into the ship there was a great calm ! See that funeral procession coming out of the city gate. The coffin is followed by a poor woman, sobbing as if her heart would break. The boy carried to his grave was her only son, and she herself was a widow. Her husband gone, this boy had been the light of her house, the joy of her heart. Now he, too, was taken, and it was more than she could bear. Jesus stopped her, and before she could tell whether or not she was dreaming, He had roused her boy from his slumber and laid him in his mother's arms.

Jesus not only made men happy by curing their sick and raising the dead, proving that God had given Him such power as no one in this world ever had or ever can have ; but He also showed that He was master of the evil spirits. Men had so long given way to these devils, that in some cases they had lost all control over themselves. Raving mad, so that scarcely any dared come near them, they were dragged to the feet of Jesus, and with one word of His they became quiet and gentle. And not only did He cast evil

spirits out of men, but He forgave them their sins. As people listened to Him, God's Spirit within woke their hearts from their long dream, and they threw themselves at Jesus' feet, confessing all, and praying Him to have mercy on them. He never sent one such away. He bid each one "Go in peace ; thy faith hath saved thee." As if He had said, "You have come to me as the promised Saviour, you own me as your King, you acknowledge me to be the Son of God, able to rescue you from sin, able to rule and govern you, showing to you God your Father. I am on earth for this very purpose, to tell you that our Father has forgiven you, that I will be your King for ever, conquering every wicked spirit, every evil thought that would lead you away from God. I will save you from yourselves and from the power of sin, save you now and for ever. Go in peace."

Was that not enough to send people away peaceful and joyful? Was it any wonder that "the common people heard Him gladly?" Far and wide was spread the story of His gentleness and power. Crowds flocked from all parts to see Him, and to learn of Him.

Jesus did not preach to them much in churches or chapels, for the priests and religious teachers did every-

thing in their power to oppose Him. He spoke to the multitude just wherever there was opportunity ; sometimes from a ship lying a very little way from the shore ; often in the fields, outside the town, away from all noise and bustle. Jesus loved the country. He could breathe the fresh air, and look up through the clear blue sky to the home of His Father. There were many things too in the country that He was fond of talking about. A little bird flew past, and He reminded those around Him of God's love and tenderness. Not one of those birds died, He said, but His Father knew of it ; and if He could thus take care of every sparrow, would He ever forget His own dear children ? He would point to a mass of golden lilies that grew plentifully in the fields of Galilee, and ask men to learn a lesson from them. There they were, blooming by God's help, more gorgeous, more magnificent than even Solomon upon his throne. If God dressed the flowers in such lovely colours, was it for His children to be always fidgeting about what clothes they should put on ? The fowls of the air, too, He said—look at them ; they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feedeth them ! Will He not also take care of you ? To be always thinking about what you

will have to eat, or what clothes you will wear, is not like children who feel sure of their Father's love. Try and do all that He gives you to do ; please Him in everything, and never doubt for a moment but He will always send you what is good and best.

Besides, their Father knew, so Jesus told them, exactly what they wanted before ever they asked Him. What would you think if children the moment their father came home ran to him, crying, "Please give me this—do let me have that?" But if our prayers are nothing but a petition for this good thing or the other, we are no better than they. Our prayers should be so much loving, reverent talk with our Father in heaven. What do you say to the parents on earth that you love so much? You climb on your father's knee ; you put your arms round your mother's neck ; whisper to them how you love them ; call them dear and kind and good ; you tell them what you have been doing to-day, what you hope to do, where you expect to go to-morrow. Will they go with you? and if they say yes, what was happy before is made ten times happier. Why not go to God your Father like that? Not in the morning and evening only, but at any time. Kneel down if you are

alone in your room, because kneeling is one of the lessons in His picture-book ; it is to teach you how infinitely great and wise and glorious He is ; it is to remind you that Jesus is not your Saviour only, but your King. You will surely have a great deal to tell Him at night ! There will be many things that you have done wrong during the day, and which you will beg Him to forgive. You will say how kind He has been to you ; how happy He has made you. Say "thank you" to Him, because you are well and strong ; because you have kind parents, brothers and sisters, friends and relations ; for giving you His dear Son Jesus to be your Saviour and King ; for letting His Holy Spirit dwell in your heart and drive out all the evil from it. Tell Him that you mean to be the brave little soldier of Jesus, if He will only help you. That you will fight against all your naughty tempers and wrong inclinations, and take Jesus as your copy and example in all things. Ask Him to do with you and all that you love on earth, just whatever He thinks best ; only to keep His arms close round you for ever, and to bring you safely home to heaven.

Jesus loved little children, and said that the Father loved them just as much. He would take them on His knee, put

His hands upon them, and bless them ; so never be afraid of going to God. The oftener you talk to Him, the happier it makes Him ; the happier, the holier, it will make you.

To His parents, Jesus was always loving and obedient when He was little ; for them, He was ever careful, ever thoughtful when He grew to be a man. His dear mother followed Him all His life through, and was with Him at His terrible death. When suffering fearful pain of body ; when heart-broken, because the people He had come to save had despised, rejected, crucified Him, He could still think of her He loved so much ; and who would care for her when He had gone.

Jesus, because He had exactly the same spirit as His Father, was never cross or ill-tempered. No matter how tried He was, how weak and suffering, He was always ready to listen to everyone's trouble, always anxious to relieve it. He could be terribly angry with people who pretended to be religious, and only mocked and insulted His Father, but to those who had done wrong and told Him how sorry they were, no matter how great the wrong, how fearful the sin, He was sweetness and gentleness itself. He did not wait

for them to do some hard thing, nor to keep on asking His forgiveness. They had only to be really sorry, really in trouble, and He found them out. "Come to me," He said, "all of you who are weary, all of you whose hearts are pressed down by the weight of your sins, all who are unhappy, all who are trying to forsake sin and find it hard, hard work ; I will refresh you, I will give you rest."

Such was the life that Jesus led while upon earth. Such is the example given you to copy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEATH AND VICTORY OF JESUS.

Is it not wonderful that anyone who led such a life as Jesus did, who was ever doing good and kind things to others, should have been ill-treated by the very people to whom He was so loving? One can hardly believe that He should have been actually hated! Even animals will love and be obedient to those who are kind to them; yet Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not. He lived among them, loving, teaching, and blessing them, and in three short years they were willing to see Him die a painful death. It happened in this way.

You remember what hypocrites the priests and great men of the Jews were, pretending to be good and religious while they were not; managing to make the poor people, and

those who did not know so much as they did, look up to and obey them. They taught their countrymen lies, and all the time despised them for knowing no better than to believe the lies. It was with these priests and great men that Jesus was so angry; and it was they who hated Him, and did all in their power to prevent the common people listening to Him. They went so far as to say that if anyone acknowledged Jesus as the promised one of God, he should never be allowed to come into their churches! The Jewish teachers had declared that God only cared for the Jews among all the nations in the world, and of them He only loved the few who knew every word of the law of Moses, and carefully attended to every little ceremony. Jesus told them that their Father God loved all alike, men in every country, of every colour. The Rabbis said that men could only properly worship God in the Temple at Jerusalem. Jesus assured them that this great Temple would be utterly destroyed; that there was no need to go there to pray, for that men's hearts were the Temple of God, because His Spirit was in them; so that it mattered not where a man was, in a room by himself, out in the fields, away on the sea, God was with him, and would listen to him. The priests

made the people believe that they could not themselves come near to God, that they must bring presents, and that they, the priests, would pray for them. Jesus proclaimed a new order of priesthood; He said, the one present a man had to make to God was his heart, and that in His kingdom all were priests; each could offer all his heart's best love to God; each could speak to Him whenever he willed, as a man talketh with his friend.

So the great men and the learned, the rich men and the priests, hated Jesus, because He denounced them to the people as hypocrites. They were jealous, when they heard of and saw the wonderful things He did, and their constant desire was to destroy Him. After many failures, they at last thought a grand opportunity had come. A feast, the great one of the year, the feast of the Passover, was to be held in Jerusalem. The city was always crowded at this time, and it was an easy thing to raise a disturbance. Jesus, with His friends, came up to the feast. A young ass was found for Him, and he rode into Jerusalem. The crowd heard that He was coming, and went out to meet Him. They gave Him such a welcome! They pulled down branches of palm-trees, spread them in His way, and

they thronged before Him and behind, shouting, "Hosannah! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord!" A strange procession, was it not, for a King? No soldiers, no grand music, no great men, but a crowd of poor people and children singing! Here was the opportunity for the Pharisees to make mischief. This man they hated was attracting the attention of the whole city, and accepting homage as a king! Now, they thought, we can accuse Him before the Roman governor; now we can get Him punished for making a disturbance and claiming to be a king, where the Romans are masters. They hated the Romans, but they hated Jesus ten times more.

The Passover was a supper that was eaten every year. It was another picture of the Jews. It was to remind them of the night in which God saved them from death, when He sent that terrible punishment on the Egyptians—the loss of their eldest children. Supper had been prepared for Jesus and His friends in a large upper room which they had hired for the evening, where they all gathered—the twelve disciples who had followed Him in His ministry, who said they loved Him best of all men. Their Master was more than ever gentle and loving that night. He foresaw the

trouble that was coming. He knew that one of these great friends at the table only pretended to love Him, and was thinking how he could best sell his Lord. He knew that in this very week there was shame and agony and death before Him. He was sad, and no wonder. But He kept His sorrow to Himself as long as He could. He tried to cheer those He loved. He had told them before, that He must soon leave them, but they were bewildered ; they seem still to have fancied, that He really meant to make Himself a great earthly king, and that they would have places of power under Him. They would not believe what was going to happen, though He had told them. Jesus had never been so tender, so sweet as He was that evening. While they were lying there round the supper-table, He took the bread they were eating and blessed it ; and He took the wine-cup from which they were drinking, and gave thanks to God, His Father, and then told His friends that this bread and wine were to them His body and His blood. If they, when He had gone from them, would take it always in remembrance of Him, they would feel how near He was to them, and they to Him. Jesus, like Moses, taught a great deal by pictures, or parables as they were called, and through all His

picture-book there is nothing more simple or beautiful than this bread and wine. What we eat, you know, becomes part of ourselves ; our meat and drink makes our bones, and brain, and blood ; so if we take bread and wine, which Jesus says is His body and blood, we must have Him for our very own. He must become actually a part of us. And this is really the case. Just as you saw that Jesus was actually one with His Father because the same spirit was in Him, so we may become one with Jesus, having His pure and loving spirit in our hearts.

When supper was over, Jesus and His friends sang a hymn, and then went out in the cool of the evening to a garden where they often walked. By this time the Master had grown very, very sorrowful. He was sure that Judas, one of those twelve friends who had been always with Him, was at that moment plotting with the priests how he might deliver Jesus to them. They did not dare to lay hands on Him in the daytime, for fear of the people rescuing Him. So it was planned that Judas should lead a band of soldiers in the dusk of the evening to the garden, and take Him by force. Jesus was listening every moment for the tramp of their feet, and His heart sank within Him ; He bid His dis-

ciples sit down a while, while He went on a little way to pray. He knelt there on the ground alone, not one friend at His side to whisper a word of comfort. Tears were in His eyes, His very heart was breaking. The thought of all the shame and suffering He had to endure was bad enough, but that was nothing to the sorrow that He felt for the very men who were going to inflict suffering upon Him. He had come to save them, and they would not be saved. They would not come back to their Father! How very few people had believed Him after all. He had loved all men, but they were hating or deserting Him, and now He was to die, and it seemed as if His life on earth were only to be like a lightning flash, making the scene brilliant for an instant, and leaving it darker than before.

See if the heart of Jesus is not indeed breaking. What is it He is saying? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" "If it may be, that I may be spared all this dreadful agony; if it may be, that you, my dear Father, may be spared the insults which are going to be offered to you in my person; if it may be, that these poor sinful children may be spared the sin of crucifying me, and putting me to open shame, my Father, so let it be." We can never under-

stand the awful struggle that Jesus was having with Himself at this hour. Remember, that as man He had all the sensitiveness, all the shrinking from pain that you have ; that as Son of God, it only needed one prayer to His Father, to have put Him where no shame nor suffering could come near Him. But His will was even, in this fiercest hour of trial, one with His Father's. It was not for Himself, but for others He had lived, and for them He was ready to die, if by dying He could win back their love to God. But their hatred to His Father was a thing simply dreadful to Jesus ; that they should hate Him, and want to kill Him, for no other reason than that He had told them the truth, proved them so completely the slaves of evil spirits, that for an instant He might almost have despaired of rescuing them. That would have been the most awfully bitter thought that could have passed through His mind. That was indeed enough to make His sweat fall like great drops of blood to the ground. But that feeling of despair, that shrinking from shame, were gone in a moment—for listen ! He goes on praying, “ Nevertheless, Father, not my will, but thine be done ! ” He willingly accepted whatever might come—insult and bodily pain ; He was willing to be mocked and scourged

and crucified ; was ready to be cursed and spat upon by the men He was dying to save, ready, in short, to do anything and suffer anything, if only by so doing He might give glory to His Father, and lead His long-lost children home.

Think very often about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, because all of us have at some time or another to be in that garden ourselves. I mean, that a time will come to each of us when, in some great matter, there will be a desperate struggle in our hearts. We should like to do God's will, but it will be so very, very hard, that we shall shrink from it. Friends, at such a time, if ever it comes to you, will not be able to help you much, and it will be for you then, as always, to follow the example of Jesus. Go alone to God, use the very words that Jesus used, and beg of Him to help you to conquer yourself, and to pray the little prayer of Christ heartily, and with all your will. And if you wish, when such a great trial comes, to be like Jesus, do your best every day to be like Him in little things. You may always find ways of being so, of giving up your will, and doing what God would have you do. Some friends give you money. Your own will is to spend it on yourself. God's voice says,

"Think of others before yourself, as Jesus did. Is there no one who is sick or sad that your money would make more happy?" Whisper to God, "Not my will, but Thine be done," and you will be learning to be like Christ in the garden. You are sitting down to something that interests you very much. A new picture-book, or your drawing, something that you would be very sorry to leave. Just at that moment, a person in the room asks for a thing that you know is at the top of the house, in the garden, or the village. Do you see how you may be like Jesus in Gethsemane? Your own will is to sit still, and enjoy yourself. God would have you kind and thoughtful for others. Jump up and run for what is wanted, and think of Jesus on your way, and at night, when you go to bed, you will be more like Him than when you got up in the morning. You will have done just what He would have done.

Do you wonder that so little a child as you can be like Him? How is it when you are with children older than yourself? You notice what they do, how they behave, what they say, because you fancy they know more than you, and you wish to be like them. You can almost always tell who are brothers and sisters, who

have been brought up in the same family. There is not only a likeness in their faces, but they have the same tone of voice, the same ways and manners. So you, if you are much with Jesus, will become like Him. He gives you His Spirit to help you to be so ; and if you think a great deal of Him, learn what He did, and try to do the same, you cannot help growing more and more like Him. But mind you, never make a fuss about it. Don't be telling people that you do this thing or the other, because you mean to be like Jesus ; keep it as a little secret between God and yourself, and the time will come when for what you have done secretly, your Father will reward you openly. You will find that you are indeed like Jesus, not in His sorrow and pain, but in the glory which God has given to Him in the world of everlasting sunshine.

You know what happened when Jesus had done praying. He woke His friends, telling them that it was time to be going : but as He did so, there came the band of men who had been sent to take Him, and Judas, His false, deceitful friend, drew to His side and kissed Him, so that the soldiers in the darkness might know whom they were to seize. The history of the next two days is a dreadful one for all who love Jesus.

Hurried before Herod and Pontius Pilate, struck and jeered at, left by a cowardly judge to the tender mercies of the priests, who persuaded the crowd to shriek out, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" bound and scourged, deserted by the friends who had sworn most to love Him, never to leave Him, made to bear His own cross till He sunk fainting on the ground! Need I remind you of the awful scene on Mount Calvary? The cross raised with the dear Saviour upon it, the nails tearing His hands and feet, two common thieves crucified one on either side of Him, cursing and reviling Him, a brutal crowd watching His sufferings, more brutal soldiers casting lots for His clothes! And worse still, tempted in this hour of bitter pain, as He had been tempted in the desert years before. "*If* He be the Son of God," jeered the crowd, "let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him!" Think what God-like strength must have been needed to struggle against such a temptation as that! One word, and an angel host would have released Him, and destroyed the cowards that thronged around His cross! But you remember what He had said before. "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" and so dying that He might save,

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with a patience that only the Spirit of God could give Him, He suffered on to the end. The worst had not come even yet. The evil spirit once more dared Him with the thought, "If you the Son have thus to suffer, can your Father love you, has He not left you 'alone?'" It wrung from the heart of Jesus the saddest words He ever uttered, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But the thought was but like a moment's shadow over the brightness of the sun. He was to die a conqueror; and with a great cry, "Father! into Thy hands I commend My spirit," Jesus the Son of God gave up His soul into His Father's hands.

For two days it seemed as if all were lost; the body of Jesus lay in the new grave which Joseph had prepared for it. His friends shut themselves up in their house, lest the priests should punish them for having followed the Prophet of Galilee. They were like men in a dream; not a week before, they had walked in that triumphal procession which conducted Christ into Jerusalem; they had thought the time was come when He would take to Himself His great power, and reign. And now—He had been killed and buried! All their bright hopes had faded. They would never again hear His kind and loving voice, never see the look of love which

had so often brought them back to Him when tempted to go away; they were like an army whose leader had been made prisoner—all was despondency and confusion. At the very moment when Jesus had been going, as they thought, to prove Himself a conqueror, they had seen Him beaten by death, laid in the grave like other men. They had thought that their Master was indeed He who would deliver Israel, but their hope of it was now cold and dead, like Him they remembered and wept for.

Then Jesus had said something about His rising again from the dead, but they did not understand Him; they had yet to learn that He was King of the grave and death; that as He by the power of God had raised others from the tomb, He had the power to raise Himself; that he had submitted willingly to death, just as He had to pain and suffering and humiliation, to show His brethren that there was nothing He would not go through for them, and to prove to them that He by His victory over death would give to all those who had His spirit, the same power.

But it was so. On a Sunday morning very early, while the dawn was breaking, the stone that stood over the grave where Jesus lay was rolled away, and He came forth as

conqueror; no more temptations or troubles were to vex His soul. Of His free love He had borne every sorrow, every temptation that we can have to bear. He had humbled Himself even to death for us; He, the Son of the Father, who might have been in the highest heaven, had lived a life of poverty and grief among men, that He might show them how to live. He had died, to give them this last greatest proof of His love—died and passed through the grave, that they too, being one with Him by the Spirit which He would give them, might rise from their graves in beauty and strength.

No sooner had Jesus arisen, than His first thought was to comfort His sorrowing friends. A poor woman, to whom He had forgiven many sins, and who loved Him dearly, came very early that Sunday, while it was even dark, to His grave. It was empty, and He was gone. Turning round, she saw Him standing close beside her, and mistook him for the gardener. But the first sound of His voice, "Mary!" brought her to herself, and her heart could hardly contain itself, as she looked on His dear face again.

That evening two of His disciples were walking to a little village called Emmaus, talking over all that had happened

last week, and their hearts were sad. Jesus came along the way, and, joining them, asked why they were so sad. When they told Him all, He taught them from the writings of the prophets, and showed them how it had been meant that the promised Deliverer should be one who would save, not the Jews from the power of the Romans, but all the children of God from the power of evil; how that He should be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; how that He should be led as a Lamb to the slaughter; that in His death He should be with the wicked, and with the rich in His grave, but that God would not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. The hearts of the two disciples burned within them as He talked to them, and when they came to their house they begged Him to come in and stay the night, for it was now late. While they were at supper He took bread and blessed it, and gave it to them. In one instant, the remembrance of that last night before the death of their dear Master flashed upon them! It was He Himself! how could they have been so blind as not to know Him! He was gone from their sight, even while they asked themselves the question, but they rose up in haste and returned to Jerusalem, and told their

brethren how their Lord had appeared to them, and how they knew Him the moment He brake the bread.

Even as they spoke, Jesus appeared in the room where all the disciples were gathered together, and said to them, "Peace be unto you." They were terrified at first, for they could not believe that it was really He ; but as He continued speaking to them, He showed them, in His feet and hands, the marks of the nails which had fastened Him to the cross, and they knew Him with rapture for their own loved Master who had been dead and was alive again. For a week or two, He stayed with them, comforting and cheering them, bidding them go in His name into all the world, and tell to every creature the good news that their Father in heaven had sent His Son to prove to them His love, to bring them back to Him, to conquer sin and death and Satan for them, to make them free children of God, instead of slaves of the devil, and to set up His kingdom upon earth—a kingdom of love and joy and peace. Then while they stood one day talking with Him on the hill-side, He was carried from them up into heaven, where one day we shall see Him at His Father's right hand on His throne of glory.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY.

You have heard, I dare say, that earthly kings, when they have won a great victory, go in triumph back to their country, and enter the city in state. The flags that have been taken in battle, the guns that the enemy has left in his flight, are carried in long procession before the monarch, and the people of his kingdom talk a great deal about what has been won by his hard fighting and brilliant victory. I want in this chapter to talk to you a little of the great triumph of Jesus, and how much He has gained for us, His subjects, by this hard-won success of His.

The life and death of our Saviour and King, His rising from the grave and going up to heaven, are the most

wonderful things that ever did, or ever can, happen upon earth. Great and good men die every day, and are mourned for, more or less, as what they have done is remembered. This one made his country rich and powerful; another, born in a land where he and his countrymen were slaves, gave them courage to fight against their oppressors, and free themselves from bondage; a third, has written books that have made the world wiser and better. But no one has ever done what Jesus did, nor will at any time be able to do it. You can tell the names of some men who have accomplished great things. Moses saved the Jews from the cruel slavery of Egypt. Samson and David destroyed the power of the Philistines, and made their nation first among others. Things such as these were great and noble, but after all, they were of use only to a very few people in the world. But Jesus won a great victory for all men, and has divided the fruits of His triumph with all. There is no one so great, but he can gain from Jesus infinitely more than He has already; no one so poor, who cannot be made ten thousand times richer than all the kings of the earth put together. Jesus has done nothing less than save everybody in the world—man, woman, and child.

Everyone that ever lived, or that ever can live, has been saved by Him.

“Saved from what?” do you ask? If you think of the chapters you have already read, you will be able partly to answer your own question.

First, you know *He has saved us from the slavery of the Evil One*. You remember how Satan had tempted men, and helped them to forget God; how he had been ruler and king in men’s hearts, and had made the world full of misery and sin. It was to break the chain which he had fastened on us, that Jesus came. If by any means Satan could have but for once induced Christ to do his bidding—if in the desert Christ had yielded, and had made the stones bread—if in Gethsemane He could have been induced to say, “*Let my will, not Thine, be done*—if on the cross He had given way, and had come down to prove His power, all would have been lost! The evil spirit would have proved himself stronger than the Spirit of God, and we, instead of being born into this world the children of God’s dear love, and the heirs to a beautiful kingdom, would have been the miserable slaves of sin, lost in the darkness, with no hand stretched out to lead us to our Father’s home.

But Jesus has not only made us free, He has given us power to keep so, given us strength to resist the Evil One ourselves, and overcome him just as our Master did. It would not be fair for us to be better off than Jesus was. He was tried and tempted, and so must we be ; indeed, if we had no battles to fight, no enemies to conquer, we could never win the crown of victory. There is no triumphal entry, no grand procession, nor banners, nor music for those who stay at home while others are risking their all against their country's enemies. So we must make up our minds to fight bravely, as our Lord did, against God's enemies and our own. Satan is still doing all he can to draw men back again into the bondage from which they have been freed. He is still telling them all kinds of lies, still doing his best to lead them into sin. He tempts them, just as he tempted Jesus ; offers them anything if they will only kneel down to him instead of God. He still taunts men with that "*If thou be the Son of God ;*" tells them, as he did at the first, that God is angry with them, and if they go home to Him He will only punish them. "Jesus died for you, indeed !" he whispers to some poor child of God, weary and sick of sin, and whom God is begging to come back to Him. "He died for this

person perhaps, or the other, *but not for you*. True, He has saved a few people, but you are not one of them. You have been doing my bidding, you took me for your king, you are my child, not God's, and I will keep you." Now this temptation is so horrible, these lies are so frightful, that no one but the devil could have invented them. They have destroyed the lives and happiness of thousands of God's dear children, whom He was loving as only a Father could love them. If Jesus had not conquered evil for all, we too might have been induced to believe such lies as these ; we should have been always afraid that our liberty was only for a little time ; that Satan would one day again get the better of us, and drag us down and down into the darkness, till we had lost all sight of our Father's loving face.

Jesus has saved us from ourselves. You will often hear it said of a man, that he has no worse enemy than himself. That means, that though he may have many friends who are kind to him, though he has been taught what is right, knows that he should not do what is wrong, he is still always in trouble about something or other, continually getting himself into difficulties, grieving his friends, and going the way to make an enemy of everybody. He is for ever making up

his mind to do a thing, and never doing it. At the time when it should be done some new fancy gets into his head, and his mind is taken up with some fresh amusement or business. We are all of us, more or less, like that man. It is of no use to blame Satan, for all we do that is wrong. He only succeeds because he finds that we ourselves are willing to listen to him, and to let his spirit come and live in our hearts. We are lazy, vain, and passionate and greedy, and he tempts us with something that just suits these naughty tempers; then we sin—not, remember, because we are obliged, *but because we like to*. We know very well what is God's will, but we are too lazy, too careless, to bestir ourselves. There is a chance of doing some little kindness to a friend, but it would give us some trouble, and so we put off doing it. We make up our minds to be very regular in everything, saying our prayers at the proper time, and so on; but one night we have been up later than usual, we are tired, and so we hurry through them as fast as we can, hardly thinking of what we are saying. Now Jesus was tempted just exactly in the same way. He had the same weak body that you have. He was often very, very tired; often, no doubt, would have

been thankful for rest, but He never gave way : in every single case He conquered Himself, and did whatever God would have Him do. If He, our king, conquered His own human weakness, you may also. It cannot be managed all at once. Little by little, day by day, try hard, for His dear sake, to overcome yourselves and your bad tempers ; and do this as He did it ; not by routing out all the little secrets of your hearts ; not by turning your heart inside out, as it were, every night, to see how much there is that is evil in it—how much anger, jealousy, and impurity—but by thinking about God your Father, about Jesus your Saviour, and striving in everything to copy Him.

Jesus has saved us from all fear, from ever being afraid. Men had, you remember, become afraid of God, because they believed that His only thought was how He might punish them, do them some injury ; but now we know for certain that He who made us is our Father, that He is love itself. We have seen Him, in Jesus, counting every hair of our head, thinking only how He can make us happy. Children are sometimes cruelly frightened by those who should take care of them, but only let them remember that they are God's dear little ones, and that

nothing can by any possibility hurt them. God watches over you day and night, He will never leave you to yourselves, or to any evil spirit. Having begun a good work in you, He will finish it; He will give you more and more of the Spirit of Jesus if you will only ask for it, and at last He will bring you home to Himself.

Jesus has saved us from being afraid of Satan. Till His coming, all the world had dreaded wicked spirits; they worshipped them, they murdered their little children, that devils might be pleased to see their suffering, and so not hurt their parents. But now Satan's power over the world is gone; neither in this world nor any other can he ever pluck us out of our Father's hand.

Jesus has saved us from being afraid of death. Before He came, millions upon millions of people had died, old and young alike. Their friends saw them grow weaker and weaker, perhaps suffer great pain, and then their eyes would close. They never spoke again, but lay cold and still. Their bodies would be laid in the ground, the grass grew over them, the flowers bloomed. Friends cried and went mourning. Families were divided; children died and left their parents to miss their happy faces and merry laughter;

parents died, and the children were alone in the world, breaking their hearts for the loved ones they had lost. It was not to be wondered at if people had become afraid of death. Jesus proved that death was but like a moment's sleep, nothing more. He came out of the grave in strength and glory, and because He did, we, for ever one with Him, shall rise also. Death was but one step of the way to His Father's home : to Him it was a very painful one, because cruel men were tormenting Him, evil spirits were tempting ; but to many of God's children death comes without any pain at all ; they close their eyes for an instant, and the next they open them in a beautiful world where their dear Father smiles upon them, where Jesus is waiting to welcome them. Fancy if some time when you were far away from home, you were carried in your sleep back again ; that when your eyes opened in the morning, you saw your dear father and mother close to you ; your brothers and sisters calling to you, falling on your neck and kissing you ; the old nurse, that was loving and fond ever since you can remember ; the servants, who were so thoughtful for you when you were sick, so ready to romp and have fun with you when you were well,—all delighted to see you, telling of everything

that had happened since you left, of all the new things that there were for you to see,—would it not be delightful? That is only what death, the messenger of God, will do for you,—take you in his arms and carry you home. You cannot see that home now, because there is a curtain hung up between it and you, but death draws back the curtain, and as the light breaks in upon you all the beauty of heaven will be seen. If death comes when you are sick or in pain—well, never mind, remember that there can be no pain but your Father allows it. It is as medicine to you, you may be sure,—not nice at the time, but will not you take it when your Father holds the glass? Drink off the cup manfully and patiently, that you may be like Jesus. Never be afraid of death. Get accustomed to think about it, to talk of it. It is not a beautiful thing, I know, but it is the very last thing that can bring you either trial or pain; that over, you will be at your Father's house, a conqueror, like Jesus, over sin and death.

Do you wonder *how* it was that Jesus by His life and death and resurrection saved us as He did? Do you think to yourself, "I wonder how He did it?" Well, we cannot as yet understand all about it, and we never shall do till we come where He is, and are able to ask Him. But our

Father likes us to try to understand it even now, and Jesus has told us a great deal which will help us to do so. Think of what I was explaining to you in the second chapter;—how men had come to look upon God as a cruel and revengeful spirit; how they worshipped devils, and had become slaves to them. You might have thought that God, whom they had so insulted, would have ceased to love them, that He would have been really angry, and said, “I will have nothing more to do with such wicked, ungrateful children.” But that the dear God could not say, because He loves on, and loves for ever; no ingratitude, no unkindness from His children, changes His heart. They are His own dear ones, and He must have them at home with Him. How were they to be brought there? He had sent teacher after teacher, He had given every day proofs of His love, in the summer sunshine and the winter snow; flowers had breathed out His fragrance, fruits had proved the sweetness of His love; and what had been the end of it? The prophets had been killed, the fruits were offered as a sacrifice to idols, and the flowers had been woven into garlands to adorn the temples of devils. Was God’s patience not tired out? Not even then. He

said, "These foolish, sinful children will not believe what they are told about me ; nothing that men can say will make them less afraid of me, or induce them to come home. They shall *see me* for themselves ! not as they dream of me, a cruel King, but as their loving and merciful Father, waiting only to forgive their sin, and to embrace them. They shall see me in the one only Son of my love, who has never been away from me, who is ever one with me through my Spirit that is in Him. This Son who has never sinned, shall go to his brothers and sisters who are covered and stained with sin. He who is the light of my kingdom shall become the light of the world. He shall live with His brethren to show them how sons of mine should live. He shall die for them, because His dying shall prove to them His love and mine, in such a way as they cannot any longer doubt it. He shall draw all men to Him. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Sin shall kill Him with pain and agony, that my children may at length see how hateful and loathsome a thing it is ; but I will not leave Him in the grave. Just as sin and Satan think that they have conquered, they shall find their power snatched from them for ever. My Son shall come forth

from the grave, and, ascending to my right hand again, shall receive, as the reward of His loving obedience, the greatest gifts for men, even for the rebellious ones." And Jesus, whose heart was overflowing with love, answered, as He ever does, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God!"

Great and glorious gifts has Jesus obtained for us, but the gift of gifts—that gift by which He saves us, is His own spirit—the spirit of love, which teaches us the truth about God our Father, which guides us back to His feet as penitent, loving children: the spirit which, if we cherish in our hearts, will make us like Jesus Himself; make us actually one with Him as He is one with the Father. Do you now understand a little the way in which Jesus has saved the world? The great prize which He gained, was the power to give to all men the spirit that was in Himself, the spirit that makes us sure the great God is our Father, and that leads us to Him. All the sin in the world had begun from forgetfulness of a Father, from a dread and shrinking from Him as from something terrible. But Jesus, the Son, came and won men's love. In Him, because He was one with the Father, they saw the Father. As they watched Jesus, noticed His loving, tender life, heard the

words of welcome and forgiveness which He spoke to the sad and sorrowful and the weary, they could not but be drawn to Him. And when He told them that He had come not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him—even His Father and theirs, could they hesitate any longer—should they not come to One so great and loving and good? But how? This was a question that had been asked in pain and weariness over and over again. How could men find out God? Jesus brought the answer—not in words, as the prophets had done, but in Himself. *He was the answer.* The poor lost children of God, who believed in Jesus as the true Son, listened to His voice, confessed to Him their sin, and heard the words of pardon, caught His spirit, and grew more and more like Him, and through Him found their way back to that dear Father with whom He was one, of whom He was the exact and perfect likeness.

You have seen what Jesus has saved you from, and how He saves you: let me tell you what He *does not* save you from, and that is, the punishment which follows sin. He did not live and die and go up to heaven just that you might do wrong, and get off without being punished. If you

sin, you will suffer, depend upon it ; you can no more put your hand into the fire without being burned than you can break God's commandments and go unpunished. How could it be ? Your earthly father does not give or spare you correction for his own pleasure. It is, as I told you already, to make you better, to help you to remember the next time when you are tempted. If, indeed, God did not love you so dearly, so everlastingly as He does, He would do, as some foolish parents ;—spare his children punishment for fear of giving them a little pain ! But He cannot see you sinning, going away from Him without doing all in His power to lead you back and to keep you ever at His side. When you really love your dear Father in heaven, you cannot feel angry with Him for punishing you : ask Him to give you strength to bear bravely, and look up into His face, though your eyes may be blinded with tears, and say, “ Father, I can bear it from *You*.”

Need I tell you that Jesus did not die to save you from a *harsh and revengeful God* ? I think you must see yourself that that is a lie, but it is one that has been believed in over and over again. Save men *from* God indeed ! You must feel what a monstrous falsehood that is ! That the Father who

has loved His children from the moment He created them, whose heart was sad and grieved because they had all wandered away from Him—who to bring them back again did not spare even His own dear Son,—who has given them His Spirit to dwell in their hearts, and whisper ever of His love,—that He should be harsh and ill-tempered with them ! Was there ever a lie so black, so dishonouring to Him ? Does He speak as if He were harsh or ill-tempered ? “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto me ; for I have redeemed thee !”

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR FATHER'S HOME.

HOME! That is a word that all children love ; it means to them comfort, happiness, and all kinds of little pleasures. But home does not seem home unless it is our father's. There are many little children who have a home, but it is not their father's. They are orphans, and have only strangers to take care of them. Sometimes even, the friends and relations of little children who are orphans, give them only the name of home. Other children are in the house who are at home, and there is a difference between them and the others. In the home of your father there is no difference made. He gives you, one and all, *a right* to be there. He does not treat you like slaves, just to do his bidding ; does not give you

your clothes, stories, and pictures as a favour. All that you have he gives you, because he loves you so much, because it is his one wish that you may be good and happy. When he rewards you, it is to encourage you to do what is right ; when he punishes, it is that you may not do wrong again. So your father's home is to you the brightest spot in the world. He himself is there ; your mother too, with the same winning smile that is as fresh and sunny when you see it the last thing at night, as when it shines in at your bed-room door in the morning. Brothers and sisters are at home ; the old nurse who has been with you so long, and always tries to beg you off when you get into trouble ; servants who have been kind to you, and are only friends under another name,—all these are in your father's home.

You can never really know what home is until you have been away from it. Were you ever at school ? When you go, you will understand what home means. Wait till the holidays are near ; you will find yourself counting the days till you go home. Cutting a notch in a stick every day, and numbering it again and again, or making over your bed little pencil lines that you may add up before you go to

sleep, and say to yourself, "Only twenty-three days now!" As the days grow fewer, you can sometimes hardly think of anything but home, and the prizes you hope to win; and what a welcome waits you at the door when you do arrive! Is it not worth all school days to be home again? Everything in your room is as you left it; the toys in their old places, the big boat on the shelf, the fishing-rod in the corner. How you want to see everything at once, but the dogs will hardly let you pay attention to anything. When you have had your run round the garden—over the green, round by the pond, where you fancy you can see that same little roach that you have so often missed catching—into the wood, just to look if the letters you cut on the beech-tree are all right, what a lot there is to be done in the house! Evening comes, and more happiness awaits you; there are new books to see, fresh games to learn. New joy is in store for the morning, for your father and mother have been planning little treats that will take you by surprise one after another. Night comes, and you join in the hymn, whose words you remember so well, "Lead us, O Christ, when all is gone, safe home at last!" "Our Father" has been said, and then there is such an embrace from your

father, such a kiss and look from your mother, such laughing and fun all round. I think that that night, when you are tucked up in your little bed, you will say to yourself, "There is no place in the world like home!"

What that happy home is to you—ay, and ten thousand times more—our Father's home in heaven will be to us all when we come there. In this world we are at school; everyone has his work to do, his lessons to learn. God sets them us, and some of them are easier, some more difficult. All of them are necessary, or He would not have given us them. We have to learn to be forgiving and gentle, kind and patient, brave and self-denying. We have to learn these lessons only that we may be like Jesus our Elder Brother. Satan is always trying to make us think that our lessons are a trouble, and that we can never learn them; and we ourselves are restless and lazy, and only too ready to believe what he says. Whenever he tries to make you believe so, tell him he is a liar! that your Father would never have given you anything to do that you could not manage; that through the spirit of Christ, which is in you, everything can be done. The Evil One will do his best to make you give up learning lessons altogether, by offering

you something that is pretty or wonderful. He will say, "There is plenty of time to learn by and by as you grow older : don't be in such a hurry, people never do any good who are in a hurry." Don't believe one word he says. He tried his very best to deceive Jesus, and he is trying in the same way with you. Don't be tempted to think you have any time to waste. You do not know how soon you may be sent for to go home. Try and get the first prize. How to be most like Jesus? that is the lesson given you. As for the prizes that God has ready, I cannot tell you about them ; for they are more beautiful than anything you have ever seen or can fancy. In that glorious country where our Father's home is, you will have such prizes as you never could have dreamt of. Jesus will take you by the hand and lead you to His Father's throne ; and then, while thousands of thousands of beautiful angels throng around ; while your parents, brothers, and sisters, and all you have loved on earth stand smiling on you more fondly than ever, your Father, God, will give to you the prize you have won. In that wonderful land the sky is always bright ; there, fruits of gold droop down into the crystal waters ; there, the boys and girls play for ever in meadows where

stars are thick as daisies, and where the sunshine never fades.

Jesus went up from earth to His Father's home ; and if we are like Him, one with Him, we must go there too. When the holidays will come we do not know. Perhaps even while you are still children, God may say, "That little one is not strong enough to be long at school, he shall come home at once ;" or it may be that He will find something for you to do, that will take many years to finish. Never trouble yourself about that ; whenever it is time for you to go home, our Father will send for you.

Only remember this one thing, that the lesson you have to learn here at school is to be like Jesus. Going to church or chapel on Sundays, or every day in the week, will not of necessity make you like Him. The Scribes and great men of the Jews did that. You can grow like Him, only by obeying the voice of His Spirit in your heart ; only by begging of your Father, God, to make you like Him, to help you keep down your bad temper, your inclination to be untruthful and cowardly, to make you obedient and loving, giving up your own will, and making others happy instead of pleasing yourself ; to make you unselfish, if you have

nice things, that you share them with your friends ; if you have pretty things, that you give them to those who have none. And to help you do all this, without saying a word about it to anyone but God ; not that people may know it, and say, "What a good child that is," but simply, because you love Jesus, and want to be like Him. Then indeed you will grow into the very image of your Elder Brother.

Think often of what He has done for you, what He has saved you from. How, but for Him, you would never have known your dear loving Father in heaven ; how, but for Him, you might have lost your way altogether in the darkness. Think of all it cost Him to save you ; how cruel His enemies were ; how cold and half-hearted His friends ; how He prayed all night to His Father for you ; how hungry He was often ; how sick-hearted and sad ; how He suffered when He struggled with Satan ; what pain He endured on the cross for you ! Can you help loving Him, help wishing to be like Him ? What would you give to see Him in our Father's beautiful home ? to have Him put His arm round you, and tell you that you might play there with His other children for ever !

You will, I am sure, often find it very difficult to be like

Jesus, but never mind that. There is nothing worth having that is not difficult to get. You will make many mistakes, often be selfish and bad-tempered : very unlike your Saviour. We are all often that, but never, never lose heart ! When you feel how unlike Him you have been, do not sit down and cry, and say, "Oh dear ! I can never conquer these naughty tempers ; I shall never be like Jesus. I shall never see our Father's home." Speak to God at once, wherever you are ; don't wait till you can kneel down. Say, "Dear Father, forgive me my naughtiness, make me more like Jesus for Thy sweet love's sake." Satan will tempt you with, "Oh, you cannot be Christ's little child, because you are so unlike Him." He is lying again. Jesus has told you that you are ; be afraid of nothing ; not ten thousand devils can pluck you out of your Father's hand !

Here on earth, you know, happiness does not last long. There are partings and disappointments that break the heart for a time. Just as you are going home from school, some one there falls sick, and all the bright and pleasant plans that were made come to nothing ; or you yourself may be ill, and shut up alone in your room, unable for a long time to join in the pleasures you looked forward

to so much. In the home of God, our Father, there will be no pain or parting. The inhabitants of that country never say, "I am sick!" Not a single cry is heard there, for God Himself wipes away tears from off all faces.

"Going home!" what glad words they are, and yet some people are positively frightened at them. Instead of talking about going home, they talk about dying, and say it is a terrible thing to die! Fancy that! a terrible thing to go home at once to the Father who so fondly loves you—to the Elder Brother who came to save you! It seems a strange thing that people should be afraid of going home; but I will tell you how I think it happens. They are afraid because of that lying "If" of Satan's. They are not quite sure that Jesus conquered him for ever; not quite certain that God will keep them safe from him. And indeed if we had in our own strength to fight against him, we might well be afraid. We have done so many wrong things, have been so unlike Jesus, that it is no wonder if we often fear that the Devil may take us for his own children. But his power is gone. Jesus has bound him, and he can no more touch us if we have hold

of our Father's hand, than can a wild beast that is shut up in a cage.

What is called "death"—but what I wish you would think of as going home—need not be a terrible thing at all. Sometimes, it is true, there is sickness and pain with it; and if there is, you must try and remember how much Jesus suffered for you, and be glad that you can suffer something for His dear sake. But very often death comes without any pain at all, and very quickly. I remember a noble boy, who promised, if he had lived, to do something good and great; he was sunshine in the house, and made his parent's heart like summer. In the morning he was full of health and spirits, ready to enjoy to the full all the games and sports of the holiday; in the afternoon he was dying from an accident—not in pain, but calm and quiet. The next day, when he had gone home to God, his little sister came to their Mamma and said, "Shall we crown him, Mamma?" Crown him! Yes, by all means darlings; for he is a brave little soldier who has fought for Christ! He tried to be like Jesus—obedient, unselfish, and loving, and now he has gone back to His Father's home, where they will make a wreath for him of fadeless

roses and lilies of light. Yes, crown him with many crowns; you can find none so beautiful as those which the angels have been weaving for him in heaven. Lay his body in the churchyard with a little cross over it, and let it rest quietly till Jesus comes again.

Never forget those, whether old or young, who have gone before you to our Father's home. Do not lower your voice when you talk of them, or purposely avoid speaking of them at all. Why should you? they are only separated from you for a very little time. You don't know but that any day you may go to join them. So think of them just as much as if they were with you. When you talk to God at night, say their names, and thank Him that He has taken them safely to Himself.

Going home to God is dreadful to some people, because they have to go *alone*. If they had friends going at the same time, they think it would be easier. "Mamma," said some children I know, "why cannot we go to heaven altogether?" You will see why, if you think a minute. It is because our Father knows best when it is time for us to go. We do not all leave school at the same time; one brother or sister leaves before the others. It is not

always the eldest that goes first ; it is the one our Father sends for. If we had to choose ourselves when to go, we should not know how to do it. Whenever God is ready for us, He will send to fetch us. Going home to Him will not take nearly as long as you take now to go home in the train from school. You are not afraid of that !

CHAPTER IX.

THEOLOGY.

Do you wonder why I have called this little book "*Theology for Children*," and that till now you have never seen the word in any single page? It is a word perhaps that you have never heard before, and you have been a little impatient, may be, to know what is the meaning of it.

Now suppose I were to ask you, "What is a ship?" If I had never seen one, you would not be able to make me understand what a ship was really like; but if you had learnt to draw, and could make a picture of a ship for me on paper; or if you could show me a book that had a drawing of a ship in it, then I should know at once what a ship was.

In this little book I have tried, as it were, to draw you a picture—to teach you what Theology is. It is that, which makes you understand about your Father in heaven; about

His own dear Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Deliverer, and King ; about the Blessed Spirit that makes the Father and the Son *one in the highest, truest sense* ; and by making you one with Jesus, leads you back to God, and gives you the right to call heaven your Father's home.

If by the help of that Spirit in your heart, you will only try and make your life like that of Christ ; take Him for your copy in everything, and do God's will as He did, you will learn all the Theology you want ; you will learn to know and love God ; you will be the brave soldier of Jesus, and one day you will sit down with Him upon His throne.

Do not be always thinking about your soul, and whether or not it is safe. Leave it to the Saviour who died for you—to your Father who will love you to the end. Let your one thought be, to do God's will and to be like Jesus, the loving, gracious King whose little subject you are, and who has said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

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